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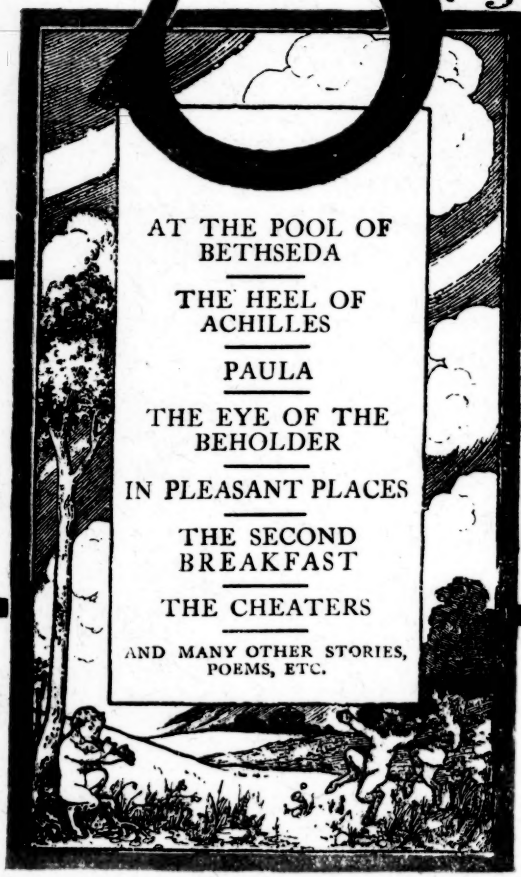
THE SMART SET

A Magazine of Cleverness

To Amuse Not to Instruct



AT THE POOL OF BETHSEDA

THE HEEL OF ACHILLES

PAULA

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

IN PLEASANT PLACES

THE SECOND BREAKFAST

THE CHEATERS

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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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Editor—J. W. MILNE

MARCH, 1921

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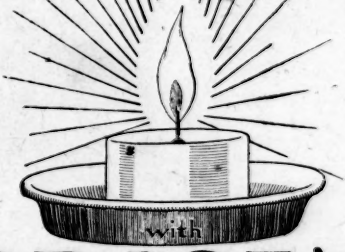

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Personally, until the E.P.D. is removed, I am not, frankly, interested in the profits, therefore, I am making this offer with Austen's compliments. Here at least he will learn a salutary lesson in compulsory economy. And let us hope that he will pass the word to wanton Winnie.

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My Beauty Secrets

by Elsie Janis

(In this little article Miss Elsie Janis, the world-famous actress, gives a few valuable hints on the care of the complexion.)

A good complexion is like the proverbial poet "born and not made," but many a perfect skin has been spoilt by the use of inferior creams and powders, which though sold at high prices and under attractive names, are not only worthless to preserve the complexion, but are actually harmful.

Personally I do not believe in using a vast array of different toilet preparations and I therefore never litter my dressing-table with them, as you can see by glancing at it for yourself. "Make-up" is of course necessary behind the footlights, but in my opinion it is greatly out of place elsewhere. All the average woman needs to beautify and preserve her complexion consists of a good *creme de toilette* and a powder of exactly the right tint. These, of course, she must have and always use regularly. But they must be really good. "Any kind" will not do.

Never put on your face a mixture of ingredients you know nothing about, simply because it feels nice on the face, looks attractive or has a pleasing odour. A well-known analytical chemist once explained to me that both greasy and non-greasy toilet creams, even the most expensive of them, often contain not only oils which promote superfluous hair growth, but also strong alkali which dries out the skin. The use of these greatly cheapens the manufacture. Complexion powders are adulterated with bismuth, pearl white and starch-like particles which impart a beautiful appearance temporarily but get into the pores, clog them, swell and then cause coarse "orange peel" skin or other facial blemishes innumerable. Since learning about the havoc wrought by these impurities, I have been more careful about what I put on my face.

Carefully choose a good cream made by a responsible manufacturer and try it carefully, noting the exact effects. If satisfactory, adopt the cream for regular use and never touch any other. Experimenting is dangerous. Ask the manufacturer to guarantee in writing that it contains no mineral oils, caustic alkali, or other injurious substances. As you will no doubt be using it for many years, I even advise going so far as to have both it and your powder analysed by an expert chemist. This will be somewhat costly at first, but it may save you money in the end. It may even save your complexion, the value of which cannot possibly be computed in money.

The cream you use must not only be absolutely pure, but it should be non-greasy. The powder should be of the extreme fineness produced by what is called the "air-floating" process and of a shade so exactly suited to your colouring as to defy detection when applied properly. Any good manufacturer will send you samples of the various tints if you require them for trial. I see you have noticed that I personally use Crème Tokalon and Poudre Tokalon. I have found these two British products to be easily obtainable from any chemist in all the countries I have ever visited. They are made according to very famous French formulas which I have tested thoroughly, with results so exceedingly satisfactory that no one could ever persuade me to use any others. Costing but 1/6 and 1/11 respectively from all chemists here, they are no more expensive than less efficient preparations of their kind. Crème Tokalon, unlike any other of which I have ever heard, has sufficient buttermilk in its composition to produce wonderful softening and clearing effects upon the skin. A lot of good cleansing with water—then this excellent cream.

I hope all this does not read too much like a lecture, but if you have a good complexion you cannot take too much care of it, while if Nature has not blessed you with one as perfect as you might wish, the use of a really good cream will do much to improve it.

Elsie Janis

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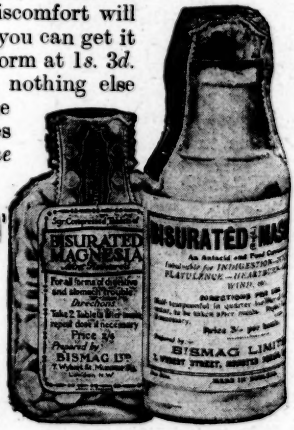

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Vol. LXIII MARCH, 1921 No. 3

THE WRAITH OF EL SOMBRERO

By L. M. Hussey

CHAPTER I

MANY years before the innocence of Altagracia was born into the world to take issue, like an unarmed antagonist, with her cynical fate, the deserted, haunted house of El Sombrero was occupied by her family, who lived there a normal and agreeable life.

Don Ramón Martinez, the master, was a "white man," that is, his blood was unmixed with the Oriental strain of the native Indian. Both his paternal and maternal grandparents had come directly from Spain.

These founders of the American family had lived and even prospered under the royal misrule, but the real prosperity of the family followed the years of liberation. Don Ramón's father had thrown his fortune with the hazards of Bolívar's heroic adventure, and when success came his reward was adequate. He established a proud family tradition. He was, in a way, a small king in El Sombrero. Eloquently repeating from day to day his democratic theories, he ruled the fortunes of El Sombrero with an aristocratic firmness.

Don Ramón, assuming the family tradition, was himself an aristocrat, but the genuine essence of his father's pride and blood seemed to have passed into the veins of his daughter.

She, named Josephina, was an admirable type of the florid Latin beauty. She had the loveliness of an odorous tropical flower; she was tall, fair-skinned and jetty-eyed, and only her tallness saved the great heap of her black hair from seeming disproportionately abundant.

She could be extraordinarily amiable and startlingly severe. There is a brother about whom little has been remembered. He escaped the great catastrophe, for he was in the capital when it occurred. He continued the family name and disposed of the properties at El Sombrero. He was, in all probability, somewhat negligible; Josephina was certainly Don Ramón's favourite.

Her mother, too, was somewhat colourless. Perhaps the old man, finding his wife a poor companion as the years accumulated, reclaimed in Josephina some of the memories of his former romantic dreams. For the girl was im-

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measurably romantic and this must have been a heritage from her father.

They were frequently together. They rode horseback over the long miles of the plantation administering justice in consultation. Don Ramón was gallant with the girl as if he were young and a lover. He deferred to her quick pities, her abrupt hates. He rewarded and punished by her word.

Like most of the men of pure blood, Don Ramón took no part in the occasional insurrections that disturbed, for longer or shorter periods, the agreeable peace of his country. Fortunately, El Sombrero had never lain in the path of any of the contending forces. The old man was free, however, with his ironical opinion of *estos caudillos*.

"Most of them are dishonest, and the honest ones are fools," he would say. "Let us conceive an honest *caudilo*—one who leads a rabble of ragged malcontents and really believes in his phrases of 'liberation,' and 'the rights of the people.' *Caballeros*, the people have more rights than are good for them, and I am a democrat with reservations. Democracy should only liberate the man of pure blood; the beast we must keep in his cage."

Seated under the royal palms of the hacienda's court, bottles of brandy and seltzer on the red, carved Spanish table set out before them, Don Ramón would elaborate his views to his friends. He elaborated them dogmatically, with a final air, expecting a deference and an agreement that were invariably received. The tropical stars glittered remotely over their heads, as if in austere acquiescence with this man of rigid contempts. He was, it seemed, justified in these contempts—justified by his appearance of strength. He sat among the little farmers, the small gentlemen of El Sombrero, like a chief in council with his subordinates. He was bigger than any of them, and because of his physical superiority, vastly more impressive.

Often Josephina sat among them, ignoring the convention that should have kept her separated from masculine affairs. In the starlight her white face, topped with the indefinite abundance of her dusky hair, turned itself, a pale intentness, to the apprehension of her father's words. Her head was on a level with his own, she was as tall as he, but instead of the blunt strength of his thick figure you found hers gracile, and as potential of quick motion as the great cats that wailed frighteningly beyond the hills of the plantation, in the sinister secrecy of the tropical forest.

Old Don Ramón raised his glass and the others drank with him.

"The *caudillos* are discreet enough to avoid El Sombrero," he growled, with a laugh.

They nodded; the frond of a great palm moved over noiselessly under the impulse of a stealthy wind and obscured the stars; they shone out again, glittering their acquiescence.

But in spite of Don Ramón's assurance, El Sombrero knew the time when the thatched roofs of the native houses blazed up like thick torches, and the insurrectos, coming out of the mountains from the north, confiscated the burros of the natives, and the horses of the gentlemen—with here and there figures of a more precious property, a girl as a prize, a young man as a conscript.

Hermoso, their leader, a huge Indian from the inner provinces, who might have been one of the original Incas, was flushed with his local successes, and presumed in his ultimate strength to advance and take the capital. He had come very close now! Until the moment he had met with no serious resistance. Ten leagues beyond El Sombrero he had scattered a little group of Government troops with the terrible effectiveness of an avenging angel, leaving their captain, a grotesque horror, swinging from a cocoanut tree.

Then, entering El Sombrero, he received news that a strong force of Government troops was not more than half a day's march from the village. At first his ferocity made him determine on a decisive stand; later the discretion of his advisers prevailed upon him to retreat.

But Hermoso had heard of Don Ramón Martinez and nothing could

make him leave El Sombrero before settling scores with the *blanco*. From the burning village the red-roofed hacienda stood up vividly, like a fortress guarding the frailty of the surrounding thatched huts. The afternoon sun, a vaster flame, blazed in crimson on the line of the distant hills.

The insurrectos swarmed out of the village, off the dirt road, and into the cocoanut groves of the plantation. They ran, yelling and shouting, like a horde of enraged tatterdemalions, their torn clothes flapping about their contorted bodies. Hermoso rode behind them on a dirty white horse.

Most of the Indians of the plantation had run back toward the uncleared land, and were hidden away, and their huts stood deserted as if a sinister plague, in that hour only, had carried off their corporeal forms as well as their immortal souls. A few, closer to the good-will of old Don Ramón, had joined him in the hacienda and here the doors were barred and heavy tables and huge chairs pushed against them, and less than a dozen men waited and saw the ragged army coming up into the clearing.

Don Ramón stood among them, huge and resolute. He had distributed the guns and he himself was armed with a weapon very rare at the time, a revolver, one of a pair sent him as a curiosity from the Continent.

His wife was locked in her room, whence her suppliant cries issued without remission: "Santo Dios, Santo Dios! Misericordia! Santo Dios! Misericordia!"

But Josephina was with the defenders. The red splotches of her excitement lay over her cheeks, almost too crimson for nature. She could feel her pulses beating, her heart throbbing. From moment to moment her eyes rested upon her father, sweeping down from his whitened hair to the great white moustaches, the thick open throat, the huge arms and shoulders.

She felt that in all the years she had loved and admired him no thrill of admiration had ever come to her to stand commensurate with the throbbing thrill that stirred her now. In her romantic imagination she found him superlatively heroic and supremely adequate to the moment's necessity. She thought that she had never loved any of the men who had wanted her love, and she thought that there could never be a man she could love unless he could measure to her father's courage and her father's strength.

In battering down the door of the hacienda the invaders lost a dozen ragged men, and the Indian, Hermoso, in seeming immortality, veered madly up and down in front of the house, uttering oaths like an endless rosary of hate.

The old door splintered and fell and for a moment more it seemed that the strength of Don Ramón was still sufficient to defend and hold his own. His great arms hurled back Hermoso's soldiers in a mad mêlée of flying limbs. The shot that finally reached him struck his wide forehead above the eyes; he still stood erect for a moment as if his indomitable spirit could prevail against all disasters of the body. Josephina saw him fall, and then, with a prolonged cry, she ran back into the *corredor* and secured herself in her room.

Her excitement was too great for grief but not for rage. Her own strength and her own courage seemed to come up into her senses as if from a profound depth. She was not conscious of any fear, although she was conscious of this moment's finality, as if a doom had been spoken and understood. But she knew that she would requite her father's end . . . in a second . . . in a moment . . .

From the other room the wail of her mother's supplications ended abruptly in a shriek.

CHAPTER II

For a few seconds Hermoso's lust of destruction was satisfied. He had already remained too long, and he needed the cover of the hills before meeting the forces that were marching against him.

But three of his young lieutenants had seen old Don Ramón's daughter

and seen her feral retreat into another room of the house. She had the qualities to touch their imaginations and make them eager for a hazard; as a price she was worthy.

Hermoso agreed to their plan: they would remain behind and secure the girl alive, and riding on horses confiscated from the plantation, would rejoin Hermoso with little loss of time.

Left alone in their partnership the three men smiled and nodded at each other, and in the smiles of each there was reflected a thought that occurred separately in the three minds. Their partnership was an arrangement of the moment, and subsequently one of them would prove cunning enough to hold the prize as his own.

They walked through the *corredor* of the hacienda, giving a glance to the palms in the court, under which Don Ramón used to speak his contempt of the *caudillos*.

They heard the girl moving within her room and heard her pulling back the bolt of the thick door. This pleased them, and it occurred to the larger of the three, holding his silver inlaid pistol in his hand, that the moment for cunning had come quickly. He would go in, he thought, and seize the girl with the pistol already in his hand, and the other two could ride on to join Hermoso alone.

He pulled open the door.

Josephina was smiling. She held one of old Martinez' admired revolvers and she shot the largest of the three before he stepped across the threshold. He dropped just outside the room and the second fell from her next shot as he stepped over the body of his dead companion. His eyes remained open. He breathed quickly and his eyes glared up at the girl.

She was not quick enough for the third. He struck up her arm and the weapon, flying from her hand, was thrown into the face of a great oval mirror against the wall, from which the broken glass fell tinkling to the floor.

But if he understood something of her courage, and found his desire of her burning like a flame from his understanding of it, he lacked all knowledge of her strength. He threw his arms about her, but she broke his grasp almost before his senses recorded the tense virility of her body. Her quick hands closed about his throat, and he struck at her madly to free himself from her terrifying grasp.

On the floor the wounded man with his staring eyes saw the two bodies swaying above him. The coloured blouse of the girl was an ominous blur that moved across his vision.

With an effort that seemed in the pain of it to tear his heart, he pushed his arm along the side of his body and drew out his pistol from the gaudy belt. Steadying his arm, trying to fix the coloured blur in his eyes, he fired.

The bullet struck both the combatants.

CHAPTER III

THE next day the Indians of the plantation returned from their hiding to resume the occupancy of their ruined *morichales*. They saw the old hacienda as before, with its thick stone, its red-tiled roof, and the border of coloured mosaic running like a ribbon above the windows. The door, they saw, was down, and here and there a motionless body lay in the clearing before the house. They went in and found Don Ramón with his faithful ones lying together in the curious indignity of death.

But the bodies of the girl and her assailants gave them their profounder emotions. It was a story they could easily read. Even though her life had been the cost, it astonished them that Josephina had prevailed against the three. An old man prodded the bodies of Hermoso's dead lieutenants with his dirty bare toes. He shook his head, and laughed.

"They might have been ten or a hundred," he muttered.

Yes, that was true, they all thought. Josephina would have slain them all, even Hermoso himself. Her honour was inviolate. They stood over her and stared down at her with dull wonder in

their flat faces. A half naked boy, breaking from the group, ran panting from the house and found his father in the clearing.

"Santa Maria!" he cried. "La Señorita is dead, but she killed seven or nine of them; they're there; see if I'm lying, and old Buenaventura says it could have been ninety or a thousand and she would have killed them all!"

It was an event that no one could forget. In a month they said that Josephina had lost her life—that was true and no one denied it—but that they had not taken her honour, and no one knew how many of Hermoso's men had fallen in attempting it. Old Buenaventura, the historian of the scene, squeaking difficultly with his ancient voice, said that truly he had counted twenty, more or less.

Then, toward the end of the year, the ghost was seen. A woman saw it and knew it for Josephina, for no one else in El Sombrero was ever so tall as she. The woman said, crossing herself and calling on the Trinity as she made the cross, that Josephina walked behind the windows of the hacienda as if she had been alive, only you could see the darkness of the room behind her as if her form were no thicker than a dried palm leaf. The woman said she ran, but as she ran she looked back over her shoulder, praying to the blessed Mother Mary meanwhile, and then Josephina was no longer walking behind the windows and you saw nothing but the clear darkness of the deserted rooms.

One by one those who had known Josephina when she used to ride out with Don Ramón died, but the legend of the girl persisted and sometime every year the ghost was seen. The house, deserted, falling into ruin, was feared. No one knows just when the purpose of the ghost was understood, nor who was responsible for that interpretation that stands to-day as a belief in El Sombrero.

But it was said finally that Josephina's spirit was not content, and the superstitions of the natives elaborated the idea that she still dwelt in the deserted hacienda, fearfully strong to avenge her name against those who held it lightly. Thus, two young men, laughing at the ghost and conceiving the idea of visiting the hacienda at night, were said to have gone and never returned. This was a proof, they told, that Josephina had destroyed them.

Meanwhile, their lands at El Sombrero sold, and the ancestral hacienda abandoned, a branch of Don Ramón's family lived in Caracas, the capital.

It was here, some generations later, that little Altagracia was born.

CHAPTER IV

She did not remember her parents, who died before any definite memories were recorded in her mind. Her father, who had accumulated a fortune through political advantage, had left an excellent provision for the little girl. All the memories of her home-life were associated with her uncle, who acted as her guardian.

This uncle, a man of the ordinary sophistication, without children of his own, was pleased to create for her a character of extreme innocence, that it might flourish like a flower in his home. He surrounded Altagracia with the strictest taboos of the old Spanish conventions. His house, one of those square stone buildings with unprepossessing front and charming interior, was fitted with barred windows that were the physical and symbolic signs of Altagracia's isolation.

As a little girl you saw her small, fair face pressed between the bars, the blue eyes looking down into the street with wonder and fascination. Many, in passing, paused and looked up at her, for this blonde child was rare and strange in a city of black hair and jet eyes. She had the frailty and unreality of a fairy.

Later, in the convent school, her romanticism began to assert itself. In the dormitories the girls read smuggled books. Some of them obtained the realistic stories of Zamacois, Baroja and Vargas Vila and read translations of the French decadents. But Altagracia discovered only the South American romantics, her blue eyes were tearful as

she turned the pages of Jorge Isaac's "Maria," and the sweet, amorous verses of Julio Florez and Anunción Silva gave her dreams of the lover that would presently find and adore her.

She discovered a sweet, strange wonder in the knowledge that she would be adored, found precious in the high romantic way that the perfect idyll of love would presently enter into her hours like a heavenly visitation.

The man himself she did not visualize, for her dreams were too vague to call up materialistic images and a face.

One afternoon in each week, when she was released from the convent to spend a few hours at home, it was her custom to sit in the patio and elaborate her romantic expectations. In these moments she often thought of her legendary cousin, Josephina. Once, as a small girl, she had been taken to El Sombrero on a holiday and seen the place where Josephina had lived. It had frightened her to learn that Josephina might still be there, as an unresisting spirit. Later she pitied Josephina, pitied her because she had never lived to be adored.

Here in the patio, with a lace ornament of sunlight falling over her through the feathered fronds of the palms, she preferred her solitude to the chatter of her friends or the secret excitements of the convent. The coming of anyone then displeased her, unless it was that of old Hernandez, who sometimes paused and talked to her as he crossed the court to visit her uncle within the house.

Old Hernandez, the political Nestor of the republic, whose cunning had survived all the dynasties, amused and flattered her. She felt that he understood her, that his interest had not the aloofness of her uncle's, and the knowledge of this mutual sympathy existed as an unspoken comprehension between them.

One day, as he was conversing with her in his manner of playful irony that made him, at times, a little puzzling, he found her gazing at him speculatively, as if she found something strange in his familiar face; he saw that she was not listening and so he paused and questioned her.

"What is it, *niña?*" he asked.

She smiled quickly, and her blue eyes fell.

"I was trying to imagine what you looked like when you were a young man, señor," she said.

Hernandez lifted the thick tufts of his white eyebrows and smiled sardonically.

"Do you learn to imagine these things with the sisters?" he asked.

"No, no!" she cried. "The sisters never tell us anything about life!"

"When I was young," said the old man, "I would have made love to you, *niña*, and you would have loved me very much. Ah, well, I must bring a young, handsome fellow here some day; would that please you?"

Altagracia coloured and laughed.

"You wouldn't dare!"

"Oh, I might. We must think of a plot, *niña*. Something to fool your uncle!"

His ironic lips were curved under the bushy tails of his exuberant white moustaches and, taking leave of the girl, he bowed with gravity. As he walked away, Altagracia thought that he was old and funny, and it seemed impossible that he had ever been young; she pitied him.

Hernandez, going indoors, found the other old man, her uncle, already arisen from his siesta and seated in a commodious chair smoking a long, thick cigar. The two friends shook hands and Martinez opened a small cabinet at his side and removed the syphon and the brandy.

Altagracia's uncle was a less impressive man than his friend Hernandez. In consonance with his appearance, he had led a less impressive life. It had been governed by circumspections and cautions, and years had gone by since he had hazarded his luck in any outside enterprise. He was short, very dark, and a little fat; his yellow head glistened like a polished fruit.

"I've been talking to Altagracia," Hernandez remarked.

"She is growing foolish."

"No, no; she is very romantic."

"Well, Hernandez, I wish she were less so. In a few months she will be out of the convent and then she will go to parties and the opera and fall in love with some young ass, perhaps the first she meets. Marriage will be hard for her at first; it will be hard for her to settle herself to sensible realities."

Hernandez sipped his brandy and soda and looked at his friend with an expression of ironic depreciation that was too subtle for the practical sensibilities of old Martinez.

"Why have you closed her up here, then?" he asked. "You've made her romantic."

Martinez shook his head, with a touch of irritation in the gesture, as if he found something instantly foolish in his friend's comment.

"It is the only way to bring up a girl," he remarked, with the final air of one who announces an axiom.

"Yes, I agree with you, Martinez, but I don't complain that our women are romantic after we give them the sort of life to make them so. That makes them all the more perfect as parasites. A practical and sensible woman, like one of those *madamas* that come here from the States, is never a charming parasite. And, after all, a practical woman is never justified to my taste. At least, my prejudice is that then she is never charming, ah? She must be entirely useless and very foolish to be charming. Utility and charm, they are always antagonistic, señor."

Martinez, to whom generalizations made little sense or appeal, listened without comment, thinking that Hernandez was a queer old character. He could not venture to think that Hernandez was a fool, for the old fellow was still too cunning in politics to be rated contemptuously.

CHAPTER V

Hernandez was interested in little Altagracia because, no doubt, he found her an admirable example of the type of woman he admired. In spite of his cunning and the success of his cunning he had always regarded life with a large measure of cynical subjectivity, and growing older, this trend of his mind was accentuated.

"People," he once said to Martinez, who listened without understanding, "are interesting because of their helplessness, and at the same time amusing because of their unalterable conviction that they are the masters of their destiny. It is like watching a superlative game. The only thing human that approaches the divine is this privilege to occasionally stand aside and watch. In our beloved country I have seen six presidents, each of whom dreamed royally of a dynasty. I admire these men who can dream. They make the spectacle of life, give it its drama. The others merely breed, like fleas, and die."

It was probable, however, that the old *politico's* interest in Altagracia had something more of the sentimental touch than his aloof pose allowed. By the charm of her innocence and the inconsequence of her romantic hopes she was agreeable to him, and therefore entered into the events of his own destiny.

He was the one, on her graduation from the convent, who presented her with a great, florid peacock fan, an ornament that overwhelmed her with its gaudy and luxuriant beauty.

"Now you've grown up, *niña*, and are a real Spanish señorita. You will know how to use that fan!"

With swift inspiration Altagracia swept the brilliant feathers up across her face, leaving her eyes uncovered. They glistened and sparkled at old Hernandez as if he were the lover foreordained. He nodded and laughed and Altagracia laughed with him and nothing was necessary to say, for each understood the other.

In these days Altagracia was exuberant with expectations. The ordered gentleness of the convent life was replaced by a flurry of worldly activities; she was to be introduced to the world at the opening of the opera season.

Every day there were many hours of

preparation. A whole new wardrobe was being made, for the short skirts, the childish dresses, were no longer appropriate. At least once every day the dressmaker came, a persuasive, voluble woman who flattered and cajoled little Altagracia and sent her periodically to her uncle with a new petition in sartorial extravagance.

The gown for the first opera night was nearly completed. In Altagracia's room, which, from the simplicity of white frocks, had suddenly flowered into a miracle of perfumes, powders and flowered silks, they fitted the gown, and the dressmaker, with Altagracia's little mulatto maid, flattered her with their breath-taking exclamations, their gasps of wonder, their small shrieks of delight. Into the counsels of this conspiracy old Martinez was never admitted.

Now, Altagracia had no time for the silent hours under the palms; in visiting his friend, Hernandez never found her there. In the morning when she awakened from her tired sleep she slid hurriedly out of bed and picked up some partly finished garment hanging over a chair-back since the previous day. Her disordered hair struggled in golden abundance down over her pale cheeks and over her white shoulders; the tips of her small fingers caressed the extravagant fabric like a devotee fingered a sacred relic; she was happy, she was glad.

Later she practised a dozen things that were new to her. She essayed the use of the gorgeous peacock fan with her little maid as an audience, and they laughed together over the conquests she would make. She regarded herself in the mirror, observing her bare shoulders and slim, white arms; she strutted up and down her little room like a *grande dame;* she flirted with a hundred imaginary faces; she invited the flattery of her little maid; a thousand times she asked the girl if she were pretty; she painted her cheeks; she combed her hair; she tried a thousand devices. Her mind was empty of coherent thoughts, but her senses were luminous with emotions.

It seemed to her that the convent days were misted, distant days, as vague as the tropical hills beyond the city when the summer rains hung a curtain before their ridges. The girls that remained there, the undergraduates, were very far from her sympathies—little girls in white frocks, living in a separate world.

Old Hernandez engaged a box for the opening night of the opera. With her little maid, Altagracia dressed in her room and then ran and joined her uncle and Hernandez in the *sala.*

Hernandez stood up and clapped his hands when he saw her, and she ran to him and kissed him several times and then she kissed her uncle.

Her loveliness had the touch of unreality that accompanies innocence. Against the white dress with gold embroideries she pressed Hernandez's gift and the symphonic colours of the great fan were reflected in her pale cheeks, like changing chromatic blushes. Hernandez gave her his arm, and arm in arm they walked out of the house together, followed by her uncle.

In the motor the two old men fell into political gossip for which Altagracia had no ear, so she sat with her face turned to the window and watched the streets, and as she watched she thought that she was engaged in a portentous adventure, and every passing car and every walking person was a figure in the setting of her adventure.

They stopped in the Plaza de San Pablo, a unit in a noisy intricacy of other cars. A glittering fringe of lights illuminated the ochre columns of the opera house so that the columns stood up like separate majestic shafts commemorating the dignity of the tropical night.

The two old men helped Altagracia to alight and together they mingled with the crowd and entered the opera.

Altagracia had never been within the building before, and the high red walls, the low lights, the rosy glow, enchanted her. They were shown to their box. The auditorium was nearly filled. Altagracia felt a deep surprise to see

so many people, and the sight of the thousand faces augmented her excitement, as if she had not understood before this moment the magnitude of the drama in which she had been given a rôle at last.

Out of the orchestra pit came the disharmonious noise of tuning instruments. Like the accompaniment of a barbaric orgy she heard the cacophony of strings and brass and wood-winds; the violins wailed a nervous monotony of fifths, through which penetrated the meaningless cadenzas of brass and wood; a kettle-drummer tapped a tom-tom, with its tight diaphragm. The lights went down. Then a little light appeared over the conductor's desk, and the conductor himself elbowed his way through the ranks of the players. The sounds of tuning ceased abruptly.

The curtain arose unexpectedly after the playing of several chords, and a crouching figure ran across the stage. Then the lights were augmented and Mario appeared, and crossing to the half-completed painting propped up on a dais, began his work upon it, pausing presently to sing in curious harmonies of the azure eyes before him, the black eyes of the absent Tosca.

"*Recondita armonia, di bellezze diverse . . . e bruna floria . . . l'ardente amante mia. . . .*"

And of his only thought: "*. . . del mio sol pensiero . . . Tosca! sei tu!*"

In her simplicity Altagracia was ravished with emotion. It was not specifically the song and singer that enchanted her, but the gaudy, theatrical symphony of song, singer, tall red walls and remote elaborate ceiling, blurred innumerable faces, dimmed lights and brilliant stage.

The scene ended with the concert of the chorus. During the brief intermission Altagracia was silent and Hernandez and her uncle resumed their gossip of political things. The second act began, and the girl hated Scarpia and found her blood running swiftly when he was slain.

The rosy glow of the lights filled the auditorium once more, and now everyone stood up and walked about, acquaintances and friends meeting, laughing, whispering significantly; men bowed over the hands of women; girls laughed behind their fans.

Two men entered Altagracia's box and shook hands with her uncle and Hernandez. One of them was old, like her companions, and she recognized him as a friend of her uncle's. The other, a young man, stood smiling at her and she dropped her eyes before his smile.

"This is Luis Bustillos," Hernandez said.

The three old men were seated in the back of the box and young Bustillos waited until Altagracia resumed her place in front. Then he drew a chair beside her and asked her opinion of the opera.

Altagracia, who had made no visions of the men she would know, was suddenly aware that Luis Bustillos was adequate to all her expectations, and she wondered why his slim figure, his thick black hair, his dusky face, his tired eyes, had never appeared in her dreams. He talked to her in a low voice, addressed to her ear only. This, she thought, was the culmination of all experience: to hear his low voice speaking intimately to her alone.

CHAPTER VI

"No, señor," she told him, "I can't answer your question because I can't compare the 'Tosca' this year with that of last year. This is my first opera."

He nodded, smiled, opened his drooping eyes and appraised her for an instant; she found the courage to raise her fan and smile behind it.

"I wasn't sure, señorita," he said. "I was sure I had never seen you before, but I was not certain that this was your first night. But how could I have escaped seeing you, if you had been here before?"

"There are so many, many people!" Altagracia exclaimed. "You might easily have missed me before!"

"No, señorita! All these girls are

dark flowers; you are the lily! Don't you see that I thought it was wonderful to find a Spanish girl with your eyes and hair, your pale skin? Tell me, señorita, there must be hundreds of us that are begging to know you—will you give me my chance?"

There was a touch of mockery in his pleading! the fioriture of his artificial words passed his lips as if they were the words of phrases frequently rehearsed. He watched the girl. Her blue eyes opened and closed behind the coloured fan; it was lowered and her fresh lips moved gently in speaking. Luis Bustillos agreed inwardly that she was exceptional and considered it a lucky chance that he was the first to discover her.

As he talked to her he busied his mind with defining her condition. He finally placed her definitely. Old Martinez had a dead brother; she was the brother's child. Yes, he recollected—she was the child who had just come out of the convent. He recalled that old Martinez's brother had been wealthy. The girl, unquestionably, was in this respect independent. His interest was enlivened. Perhaps, he thought, his chance was more solidly lucky than the luck of a conversation, than the luck of looking into charming eyes, gold hair, artless smiles. A touch of material calculation came over the languor of his features.

He was speaking, meanwhile, of the music and the singers, and Altagracia was content to answer and to comment as little as possible, for her mind was engaged with a curious and intense wonder.

Her wonder revolved around the psychic discovery that Luis Bustillos was a man, and utterly different from herself. The strangeness of his other sex startled her then as if she had always lived in a feminine world. Her uncle, old Hernandez, her uncle's other friends, had never aroused this wonder. Luis Bustillos was a new and potent mystery. She longed to be invisible, to be unseen by him, and near him, so that she could look steadfastly at his face, this face of another sex. Each familiar point of his masculine difference was now an unfamiliar enchantment—the haze of his beard tinting his cheeks blue-black beneath his dark skin, the breadth of his shoulders, the straight strength of his lips, the down of black hair on his wrists and hands.

The lights were lowered for the final act and Bustillos and the other man arose to leave the box. The young man bowed over Altagracia's hand and as he did so she heard him whisper to her.

"I shan't forget you, lily!" he whispered.

His words gave her a romantic shock, the definite promise of adventure. Behind her she heard her uncle and old Hernandez settle themselves in their chairs, and without turning she saw their old faces before her eyes; she saw old Hernandez with his huge, white moustaches and her uncle with his shiny head.

She pitied them. Her pity was sharp and definite and she pitied them because they were old. She was suddenly sure that they could never understand her, that neither of them could ever be her confidant, that in her heart an awareness had come to beat there beyond their discernment, as if they were out of life and knew nothing of life's experiences.

These thoughts, persisting, made her silent and a little solemn on the return home. When Hernandez helped her out of the car she touched his arm lightly, as if he were fragile, as if she must be tender with him. They went indoors and Altagracia went to her room. Here her little maid undressed her and she told the girl of her meeting with Luis Bustillos.

"I must describe him carefully, Ismenia," she said, "because I believe he is coming here soon, and it must be a secret; you must be able to know him when you see him, Ismenia."

Meanwhile Martinez and his friend had gone to the smoking room.

"Young Bustillos is interested in Altagracia," Hernandez remarked.

Martinez frowned and slowly puffed upon his cigar before replying.

"Well, then," he said finally, "let him be interested properly. You and I had our young days, Hernandez, and

we understand a fellow like young Bustillos, although I don't believe we were quite up to his escapades. For the past five years he has needed a father—someone to take a stick to him in a closed room, occasionally. Isn't that true? Probably there's very little of what old Bustillos left him remaining. I shall watch Altagracia, *amigo*. Young Bustillos will only know her under the proper conditions."

Hernandez sighed and then smiled with his characteristic suggestion of irony.

"I have an unlucky sense of fair play, Martinez," he remarked. "As a husband for Altagracia this young man is very, very unworthy. I'm extremely positive of that. But then, all our young men are very unworthy. To a man with a sense of fair play it is a difficult, I might say, an insoluble problem. Our young men, before they become husbands, have a very interesting and reprehensible life. Our young girls have no life at all—only romantic expectations. To adjust this matter we could only do one of two things—deprive our young men of their charming reprehensible experiences, or show our girls the folly of their expectations. Neither plan is fair. Moreover, it is my opinion, Martinez, that life works itself out very unscrupulously, no matter what schemes we attempt."

Martinez nodded. He was growing sleepy. Sometimes he thought old Hernandez a bore.

CHAPTER VII

UNDER the stress of financial stringency, from which he saw no chance of immediate escape, Luis Bustillos had given up his excellent bachelor rooms near the plaza Bolivar (and the cafés) and had gone to live with his sister Marta.

Marta, as her share of the estate, had retained the old home in the Paraiso, which she administered with an efficient economy. She was fully acquainted with the life of her brother. His adventures did not shock her, for she was practical and somewhat hard, but she was very scornful of his extravagances. These she regarded as a weakness; his adventures were probably natural.

Nevertheless, she did not refuse him a place in her home, and occasionally she allowed him to borrow money from her, although she was not deceived by his euphemisms, and looked upon each separate sum as a gift.

The day following Altagracia's great experience, Luis came into the dining-room and found Marta eating her breakfast. He nodded, seated himself at the table, and began eating the fruit that was placed before him.

He raised his eyes and looked across the table at his sister. She was an exceptionally unlovely woman, he thought, and it irritated him to be under the necessity of facing her several times a day. He wondered why she ignored what little advantages she possessed. Her skin was very bad; an occasional massage and some powder would have improved it. She wore her hair tight against her head, and it seemed as if, in twisting up the knot into which it was gathered at the back, she had pulled and stretched until her scalp was half detached. Then, too, she was thin and as devoid of curves as a walking-stick.

His disparaging thoughts of Marta gave him, by contrast, a sudden recollection of little blonde Altagracia. He found at once that his new reflections were more agreeable and the expectations of the day enlivened. He decided, then, to see Altagracia in the afternoon.

"Marta," he asked, "what do you know about Guillermo Martinez; I mean, what do you know about this niece, the one called Altagracia?"

"Nothing very much, except that it's useless for you to try to know her, Luis."

"Well, now, why is it useless for me to try to know her, tell me that? Am I a leper? Am I unclean?"

"Well, the reason is that Guillermo Martinez is an honourable man. Go over to the Puente Hierro and see some

of your loose girls there. Don't waste your time with Martinez's niece."

"Marta," Bustillos remarked, after a pause, "you are a surprisingly naïve woman at times, considering that you despise 'innocent' women so much. Don't you realize that Martinez is simply honourable in the way that every man is honourable after he passes sixty and loses all his hair? I haven't any doubt that he knew the mothers of these women at the Puente Hierro twenty years before I was born. He won't consider my acquaintance with their daughters in any way. I suppose a Bustillos has as good a name as a Martinez? I don't imagine it would degrade Martinez's niece to acquire my name?"

Marta raised her head sharply, staring at her brother with a round, speculative gaze, as if she sought to penetrate the languid mask of his face and discern the quality of his inner sincerities. It occurred to her, suddenly, that he was, after all, only another of the men of her country, worse than some perhaps, but actuated by the same conventions. Yes, it was natural for him to consider an alliance; a suitable alliance was, indeed, his urgent need. He was at the end of his tether. His necessity was to retrieve the means of life.

She dropped her eyes and nodded.

"I didn't understand you, Luis," she said. "No doubt you could see Altagracia under those conditions."

Luis found her words very pleasant and definitely reassuring. For some reason he had entertained a few unpleasant doubts. He respected Marta's opinion and did not underestimate her sophistication. Her view was that under honourable circumstances there could be no barrier. In the satisfaction of the moment it occurred to him that little Altagracia herself was an additional compensation.

Before he left the house that morning he succeeded in getting another "advance" from his sister, who was, perhaps, a little softened by the knowledge of his new intentions.

He emerged into the Paraiso carrying a light stick that blended with his gray clothes, and the soft gray hat which he wore tilted to one side. His easy air did not betray that a piece of unpleasant business confronted him, but now, with the means in his pocket, he no longer entertained the idea of refusing the demands of the woman to whom he was going.

In a few hours his new plans had become very definite. The other woman, the one he was visiting now, might easily interfere and destroy his chances with a word or two. She could not, of course, hurt him with old Martinez, who would doubtless refuse to listen to her, but if she heard of Altagracia she would be clever enough to go to her.

Beyond the Iron Bridge he entered an old stone house, square and unadorned like a packing box, that swallowed his elegance in the gloom of a damp interior.

The room into which he walked had the lifeless air of a place of abandoned and extravagant gaieties. The chairs were unsubstantial, cheaply ornamental, and badly scratched. In the centre of the room a cheap table was covered with a dingy centrepiece of coloured embroideries, and the uncovered edges of the table were stained with the rims of wet glasses.

Against the wall a young woman was lying on a frayed, yellow sofa; she struggled to a sitting posture as Bustillos came in and blinked at him with sleepy eyes.

She was plump and somewhat pretty and her vulgar beauty was given an unexpected touch of character by the surprising firmness of her well-shaped lips.

Recognizing Bustillos, she arose abruptly. She gathered up the disordered strands of her black hair, tucking them up under her ears. She pulled her dress straight at the shoulders.

"Your letter came," Bustillos said sulkily. "Jesus Maria! Why don't you send your documents by the mails? Why do you pick out all the old unsavoury hags in Christendom to be your messengers? Don't you understand

I'm living with my sister now and dependent on her good opinion? Do you imagine she cares to receive your astonishing couriers in her home?"

The young woman smiled and nodded as if in satisfaction.

"Luis," she said, "the mails are a very good excuse. 'I didn't receive the letter,' or 'I don't believe you ever mailed any such letter.' When I send, I am sure you receive."

Bustillos made an impatient gesture, took a further step into the room, and raising his eyes, looked steadfastly at the girl before him. He seemed to determine on a manner of approach. The irritation passed from his face and out of his inner discretion came a softened expression.

"Carmen," he asked, "why do you always believe that I have deserted you? You know things are miserably hard with me now; it isn't that I want to neglect you, that I don't want to help you. Santo Dios! I can't even help myself."

Stepping closer to him, the girl seemed to struggle against yielding to his entreaties for commiseration. Succeeding, for the moment, she looked straight into his eyes.

"Excuses?" she questioned.

Bustillos shrugged his shoulders with that despairing manner assumed by a teacher before a pupil impossibly obtuse.

"Here!" he cried, thrusting his hand into his pocket, and bringing it out with the fingers curved around a crumpled roll of bills. "Excuses—of course not! I am trying to make you see how hard it was to get this for you. Caramba! Deliver us from women!"

The girl smiled suddenly, detached the banknotes from Bustillos' fingers and thrust them into concealment underneath her dress. Then, throwing her arms around his neck, she kissed him fervently on the lips

"You care for me, *amorcito?*" she murmured. "You care for me?"

Bustillos soothed her with his caresses.

CHAPTER VIII

ALTAGRACIA'S room had two windows. One of them looked out upon the palms in the court; the other faced the street. It was a quiet street. Even in the afternoon, when the distant Paraiso became the processional way of many motors, her street maintained its aloof calm, into which the calling voice of a *vendedor*, bearing his tray of *dulces*, lifted itself into the languorous air like a *muezzin* calling the faithful to their prayers.

This afternoon Altagracia sat at her window that faced the street. The recollections of the night before, a symphonic tapestry into which were woven the music, the rosy lights and the whispered words of Luis Bustillos, transfigured the simplicity of her little room.

She sat at the window, into which the sun entered slantwise, throwing the shadows of three iron bars across her face like immaterial fingers laid upon the features of her loveliness.

The *vendedor* had made his afternoon round, and the momentary commotion of his visit had subsided; it was very quiet again.

A lean dog, under some mysterious urgency, trotted by rapidly, making a swift pattering noise with his paws. Then Altagracia heard a slower and heavier footfall; a man was approaching.

She saw the top of his light felt hat pause under her window. The hat was removed, a face upturned—and she recognized Luis Bustillos.

His face startled her and gave her the curious impression of time repeating itself, as if the previous night had returned, the moment of meeting in the box, Bustillos looking at her for the first time.

She heard him speaking to her.

"I told you I would come, señorita!" he said softly. "Were you waiting at your window expecting me?"

Then, hearing his question, she realized that she had been waiting. If she had not been waiting at her window for him, she had been waiting there in

the mood for adventure, in a romantic mood, and since the previous night romance had become personified.

She nodded her head to him, yes.

At her acknowledgment he smiled with pleasure. He began to speak, in low tones and florid phrases, such as any young man of his country would compose and say under such circumstances. His voice seemed to shape itself in an effortless delivery and a slightness of volume that made it appealingly intimate, as if no one but Altagracia, at her exact distance from the speaker, could hear the words he was saying.

The sun fell over the dark skin of his upturned face, and his eyes, closing against the sun, became more languorous.

"Ah, señorita!" he murmured, "you have been very unkind to me. You look surprised and try to think how you have been unkind, and you decide that you could not have been unkind, for you have only seen and talked to me once. Señorita, a moment is enough, only the part of a moment, for a man to find that your eyes have met his own. A part of a moment to take away all his peace, although he might have sacrificed his hopes, and everything he wanted most as a price for his peace. . . ."

There was not so much a novelty in his words, or in his passionate restraint of voice, as the gift of a pervading joy. It was, indeed, her first experience of such speech and of such a situation, but it was the speech she had expected and the situation she had dreamed of. Her books had made the experience known to her; her imagination had elaborated it.

"How could I take your peace, señor?" she asked.

"By making me think of no one but you, señorita, nothing else. Now I understand the agitation of our blessed saints when the miracles were shown to them. Perhaps they felt some of the unworthiness that I feel. Were you surprised to see me here to-day, señorita? It seems so inevitable to me that I can hardly understand how you could be surprised. I feel as if I were in the hands of a fate, señorita; I am a slave to a splendid necessity!"

Altagracia looked down between the thick bars of the window, watched his face, dropped her eyes before his gaze, listened and found his extravagances wonderfully appropriate. There was the rhythm of the expected event in his presence, in his words. Her senses were sublimated; she herself was conscious of a fateful urge, and believed herself the appointed one of a sweet destiny.

Bustillos, composing his easy rhapsodies, watched the girl and thought that she was not entirely unworthy of his lyrics. He came to see that he had been very fortunate. He had been fortunate in his discovery; he was the first to find her. He needed her, for his necessities were acute. He realized that his life, in the past few months, had been intolerable; each day was an intolerable adventure in indignities. What a hard woman was his sister Marta! How well she conserved what belonged to her! Watching little Altagracia, he felt an emotion related to gratefulness, an unusual softening of his mood. She would save him from his dependence. Then, too, she was unquestionably lovely.

From within the house a man's voice called Altagracia; it was her uncle. Bustillos swung his gray hat in a circle about his body, bowed cavalierly, and whispered that he would find her at her window the next afternoon. She watched him until his slim figure disappeared beyond the range of the window. With the poetic enthusiasm of romantic thoughts, she left the room to join her uncle. The door closed behind her, the room was silent, it was again a chamber of ordinary uses, its vestment of chromatic illusions had gone with the girl.

Her uncle was waiting for her in the patio.

She sat down beside him on the bench; he smiled at her, touched her hand affectionately.

"I saw young Bustillos outside," he said.

She was surprised and confused. She found nothing to say, and her white cheeks were coloured red.

"*Niña*," continued her uncle, "I had no idea you would make a conquest so soon. But you must not talk to Luis from your window. I will write to him this evening."

Altagracia raised her eyes, looked at her uncle for an instant, and a feeling that he could never understand her gave her an obscure emotion like a veiled anger. The sun gilded his bald head; the majestic palms dwarfed the round complacency of his figure. He was, indeed, she thought, for ever beyond the terms and understanding of romance. He was less close to her than old Hernandez, who, even if she had pitied him of late, was a little mysterious. Her uncle was only fat and old.

As Martinez preached the necessity of proper decorum to the girl he watched her and wondered a little about her thoughts. The bright sunlight accentuated her youth and frailty and the obviousness of these stirred his imagination. The limitations of his imagination and the customary lethargy of his mind limited his speculations in extent and persistence. He thought that it might seem pleasant to be so young as Altagracia, and then he thought that there was very little compensation in her youth because her inexperience would eventually be the source of painful disappointment. However, he thought that innocence was an excellent and desirable thing, and that the disappointment hers would bring her was inevitable, like age.

That evening he wrote to Bustillos and asked him his intentions in regard to Altagracia. The next day the young man called and a long conference was held. After this Bustillos used to call three or four evenings each week and talk to Altagracia whilst her uncle sat in the room, at the farther end, smoking and reading. The intentions of Bustillos were definitely established and satisfactory.

Now, on opera nights, the young man was always one of the party.

The betrothal was announced and the day of the wedding was arranged.

Every morning Altagracia remained in her little room, writing a long letter to one of the former convent girls. She wrote many pages about her emotions, the emotions of love.

"I often think of my poor dead cousin Josephina," she wrote once, "who lived so many years ago. The Indians believe that poor Josephina's spirit cannot find rest because Josephina's honour is not satisfied. My uncle says that Josephina was romantic like myself. I think I am romantic because I am happy. Poor Josephina may have been happy too, but I pity her, *pobrecita*, because she died before she could find out the real meaning of being happy."

CHAPTER IX

THE real meaning of happiness, in terms of her lyrical naïveté, she was finally able to explain to her friend face to face. A few weeks before Altagracia's marriage the girl came to visit her. They had been separated for more than half a year now.

On leaving the convent the girl, Adela, had found a more acute novelty in life than little Altagracia, for she had been permitted to visit her brother who was living in the United States. Eight months there had sufficed to upset all her traditional prejudices. She returned with confused notions of "liberation" and an active contempt, a pitying contempt, for the life of her friends.

To this confidante Altagracia unburdened her expectations. There was a curious inconsecutiveness in their talk together. Adela, a plump, dark-skinned girl of the conventional Spanish type, with a touch of that becoming slant to her eyes that betrayed some admixture with native blood, listened impatiently to Altagracia's rhymed lyrics, interrupting them with the free verse of her own experiences.

In the afternoon hour of *merienda* they liked to sit eating *dulces* and talk-

ing. In the corner of the room Altagracia's little maid sat listening and smiling, like a child in a theatre.

"I can't forget," Altagracia said, "that a year ago we were so silly whispering against the rules after lights were out in the dormitories, arguing about the most popular sister, telling each other silly stories. I remember how afraid I used to be of Sister Amelia; she was so stern. I don't think I would be afraid of her now. Oh, Adela, I have grown a thousand years since then!"

She laughed, her cheeks flushed, a breath of wind from the barred window stirred the strands of her gilded hair. She looked incredibly young, and in the frailty of her loveliness incredibly evanescent, like a flower that reaches perfection in a single night and lives no longer.

Adela, in her plump satisfaction, looked at her friend from the lofty pity of her experience.

"You should know how they do in the States, *chica*," she said. "Here you meet one man; in a year in the States you could meet ninety or a thousand. Absolutely, there is no formality. You are surprised, but it is true that every girl in the States stands on the street and when she sees a young man she smiles and he comes up to her and they talk, and well, she knows him."

Altagracia's eyes were reminiscent. Her cheeks rested in her two palms.

"I thought the first opera was a fairyland," she said, "but when Luis came into the box I thought he was a Prince."

"In the States," said Adela, "they have no rules, absolutely they have no rules. You meet anybody you want to. You just decide to yourself: 'I want to know him,' so you nod your head or smile and you know him."

But, despite her pitying contempt, Adela was at bottom impressed by Altagracia's fortune. Altagracia was to be married; Luis Bustillos, with his slim grace, his languor, his easy speech, was enviable; Adela envied Altagracia.

On the day of the wedding both girls were in an hysteria of excitement. From moment to moment messengers arrived with flowers. Every room had its vase with a heaped bouquet. In the afternoon Adela helped Altagracia adjust her bridal gown. The bride stood like a lily in her room and Adela kissed her again and again and the little maid wept noisily.

At seven in the evening the party left for the Municipal Council, where the marriage was recorded and then, swinging in the cars out of the Bolivar plaza, drove to the church of Altagracia, named like the bride.

The priest stood with his back to the altar; the perfume of flowers and incense mingled in the church like a marriage of sweet odours; through her tears Altagracia saw Luis standing beside her. She thought that her love would break her heart, and she wondered if she were the first in the world to really love.

The Sacrament was concluded and slowly they left the church. Now the bride rode home with her husband, whilst Hernandez, Adela and her uncle followed in a separate car.

At midnight, after the old custom, the bride and bridegroom ran out of the house while the guests were dancing, and drove away together.

Hernandez, watching with Martinez from a window, turned to his friend and smiled.

"It is always the same, Martinez," he said, "and seeing her go recalls memories of the night I was married. I wonder what young Bustillos is thinking? Probably his thoughts are different from those I had."

Martinez grunted absent-mindedly.

"I mean that he's a different sort of a young fellow. I was far more naïve, I'm sure of that. And then, my Sofia was a different girl from our little Altagracia. Sofia was practical—you remember, Martinez? I was an excellent husband."

He seized Martinez's arm and they walked together to the buffet. Hernandez filled the glasses.

"You wonder why men remain married," he speculated. "I was not afraid of Sofia—that is, not especially. Martinez, we will admit that our little Alta-

gracia will be disillusioned, but then, from the man's standpoint, Sofia was not what I expected. A man too has his expectations. They never become fact. What he gets is a set of very binding relationships, a certain condition of living, that establishes very unexpected ties. After a time a man might regret taming his shrew—he would miss her shrewishness. It is more than a habit. It is a new way of life. Very often it is quite endurable."

He drank, put down the glass, and smoothed his white moustaches. Looking at Martinez he nodded his head toward one of the guests.

"There's Blanco," he said, "a foolish *politico*. Why does the president hesitate about putting him in prison? I will tell you, *amigo*. Because the president is nervous about Blanco's wife. A very violent woman. They say she beats Blanco. But at the same time she saves him from the consequences of his political stupidities. It is often an advantage to be a married man."

CHAPTER X

ALTAGRACIA understood the primitive joy of submission, and to be submissive made the early weeks of her marriage very happy.

These weeks were spent at Trinidad and Curaçao. Luis Bustillos indulged the novelty of Altagracia's innocence, her solicitudes, her service upon himself. He was planning, meanwhile, the resumption of his former life, the reopening of his apartment in the Plaza, the rejoining of his friends from whom his financial stringencies had, to a degree, separated him. But he was not in haste to return to the capital. Altagracia had, for the moment, her appeal. He was not quite weary of it yet.

He did not intend, of course, to take Altagracia to his old apartment. Their new home had been given to them by Martinez as a wedding gift. It was one of Martinez's most comfortable properties, not far from his own dwelling—a large, old house without the slightest architectural virtue, but possessing the usual inner commodiousness. Bustillos regarded this unexpected possession as another item in excellent luck, the novelty of which had not yet evaporated.

The days of absence from the capital passed in a languor of idleness. Altagracia watched the needs of Luis like an extraordinary mother in passionate devotion upon her child. The minutiæ of devotion found her tirelessly adequate. She lighted his numberless cigarettes, piled cushions in his chair, brought him the papers to read, unlaced his shoes in the evening.

She was the first to awaken from the afternoon siesta, and when Luis was awake she brought him brandy and the siphon, for she already recognized this as one of his needs. She even made an effort to keep him company in drinking his favourite beverage, but the strong distillation sickened her, and that evening she cried a little when she thought that there was even a single moment of his life into which she could not enter with her companionship.

Bustillos, pleased with her ministrations, kissed and caressed her and was the lover, Altagracia thought, who had always passed like a knightly figure through her dreams.

Then, at last, they went home and began to live in the new house.

Altagracia suddenly found that it was a proud thing to be the mistress of her own home, and from this fresh viewpoint she realized the happy change in her condition. She had her little maid again; together they talked and consulted, laughed, clapped their hands naïvely, arranged and rearranged every room. Adela came, Adela was a confederate in the new delights.

She visited her uncle; she saw old Hernandez, and when they met he bowed very extravagantly over her hand and called her "señora." This delighted her and Hernandez laughed with her at her pleasure.

For the first week Luis always remained in the house until after his siesta, when, with his cavalier manner that went with him like an attendant genius, he left, swinging his stick, not to return

until dinner. Altagracia wept when he began this practice and wept over the words he said when she expostulated, but she forgave him. During these afternoon hours of separation she either visited her uncle, or entertained Adela, who told her of the singular customs in the United States, and listened to Altagracia's continued rhapsodies.

Then, one evening, Luis did not appear.

The dinner hour passed and Altagracia's fears leapt up like a sudden flame. She watched the street from the windows, she stood at the door, she called his name in the house when a noise made her hope that he had come.

For the first time a realization of the sinister chances of life settled upon her thoughts like a vulturous bird. The accidents of the streets, the vengefulness of enemies assailed her romantic mind with terrors.

Later in the evening she yielded herself to the helplessness of tears. She longed to go to her uncle, to hurry out and find comfort somewhere, but she was afraid to leave the house, for Luis might be brought there during her absence in an extremity of need.

After midnight she heard the outer door open. Sobbing hysterically she ran through the corridor, arriving as Luis was passing through the door. He was alone; he was unhurt.

"*Amorcito!*" screamed Altagracia.

Bustillos stood just within the door and, removing his hat, he sent it sailing from his hand with the gesture of a comic actor. The hat struck the wall, crumpled and dropped like a dead bird.

Bustillos stared after the hat and began to laugh. His laughter was irregular and somewhat mechanical, like the glee of some talking automaton. Altagracia, with her arms extended, stopped; her eyes became round, her stained cheeks whitened with fear, her lips fixed into silence.

Bustillos stumbled into the room and seized a chair for his support.

Then Altagracia understood—he had been to his café, he had swallowed too much of his favourite brandy. The swift lifting of her fears left her with an hysteria of relief. She began to sob and laugh. Poor Luis! Poor Luis! To-morrow he would be sick! In the same way she had seen her uncle sick.

Clinging to the chair-back she saw him sway as if he would fall. She ran forward to save him.

He jerked about sharply as she touched him, released one of his hands, and with a violent thrust pushed her back with his open palm. She stumbled against a chair, tripped, fell to the floor.

"*Caramba!*" muttered Luis. "What did you follow me here for? *Las vagabundas!* Never rid of them. Make a fool of a gentleman. I'm a *caballero*. I'm Don Luis Bustillos de la Luz. *Caballero . . . si . . .*"

CHAPTER XI

DISILLUSION came to Altagracia as a catastrophe of fabulously swift revelations, as an avalanche of terrible disclosures. The edifice of her disenchantment was built up overnight, like a palace commanded of a diabolic genius.

Her faculties might have sustained a gradual disillusionment, an apprehension only final after the addition of many slowly added increments. But her romantic heart, her profound innocence, could not meet the swift eclipse of her hopes that came now, with the sudden finality of a pagan doom into her life.

Bustillos reacted to the few weeks of his conventional idyll with Altagracia like one escaping from a prison. Returning abruptly to his former life, the charm of her tepid personality, her white innocence, her childlike humours, passed like a face observed for an instant in dissolving clouds. She irked him, she irritated him; he was not simply indifferent to her. He resented her moral claim upon him; his pride resented her agency in his liberation.

Altagracia, in her tragic innocence, was less than a child in understanding. Again and again she reviewed the first idyllic weeks, the sweetness of ministering to her beloved's little needs, the thrill of his caresses, the prospect of en-

during romance. Her review came to the evening when Luis had failed to return for dinner, to the hours when she waited in fear, to the moment when he stumbled into the house—and struck her. From that moment her idyll had ceased, as if his blow had been the symbolic gesture of an intolerable dissolution. She could not understand.

She could not understand, and in a bewilderment that grew from day to day she tried to rationalize her catastrophe, to find some fault in herself, to discover some act, some condition that would serve to explain the new relationship.

Every day she saw Luis leave her, sometimes sullenly, sometimes with a cynical word, sometimes with an indifference to her presence that gave her a maddening sense of unreality. Occasionally he would disappear for stretches of days; again he would return within a few hours, in an angry mood, in which, with a reproachful word from her, he would flare into a tirade of abusive sentences.

She became, at last, insensible to the rare moment when his whimsy made him hold her in his arms, caress her, add diminutives to her name. She was unable to respond to these moments, to rouse her senses from the deepening bewilderment.

All her sensations, the commonest sensations, became attenuated, like the senses of one numbed by an analgesic drug. When she walked through the rooms of the house her feet felt light, her body felt light. The touch of a familiar object was an unreal touch; her grasp of corporeal realities diminished.

Her psychosis was a psychosis of profound bewilderment, not profound grief.

Sometimes she would sit for an hour in the patio, and you could scarcely see the motion of her inaudible breathing.

One day she was sitting there and the maid entered from the *corredor*, and told her that a woman was waiting to see her in the *antesala*. She arose and crossed the court and passed through the *sala*. She wondered if Adela had come to see her. It did not occur to her that the maid would have known Adela; it did not occur to her that Adela would have run through the *corredor* and found her and kissed her without formality. It had been a long time since she had seen Adela, she thought.

Going into the *antesala* Altagracia stood and looked at the woman she found there with a puzzled frown. She wondered if this could be some friend she had forgotten. She felt that she could not remember well any more, and was ashamed because this face did not associate itself with memories or a name.

There was a little table in the room and the woman had been seated at this. She arose when she saw Altagracia and Altagracia wondered if this could be Sister Teodora from the convent. It did not occur to her that Sister Teodora, although young and plump, would not appear wearing a black *mantilla* and a coloured skirt

"I am Carmen," the woman said.

Altagracia was silent.

"Has Luis ever spoken to you of his Carmen?" she asked.

Altagracia's lips fluttered, but she found no words to say. She did not understand. Luis . . . Carmen . . . this was not Sister Teodora.

"I am his Carmen," the woman added.

She said this and then stood near the table with her head lifted and her body in a defensive attitude as if she expected a reaction from Altagracia that might attempt some physical hurt. Meanwhile she looked at the bewildered girl as a duellist might study his antagonist.

"Señorita," Altagracia faltered," what do you want, señorita?"

Carmen stared at her a moment and then, relaxing the rigidity of her pose, a swift expression of despair came into her face.

"Luis married you?" she whispered.

Altagracia did not answer.

The despairing expression in the woman's face deepened.

"I came here," she said, "and thought when I was coming that I could do anything to you. I thought I might even kill you. Oh, little señora, you were

not to blame! You didn't know . . . He never mentioned my name! You never heard him speak of his Carmen! Luis Bustillos! Thou immoral one!"

Into the confusion of Altagracia's mind came a foreboding; her eyes widened with fear, the pallor of her cheeks grew more pronounced. The two words of the woman—"his Carmen"—began to repeat themselves in her mind like a terrible refrain.

"Señorita!" she cried. "What do you mean?"

"Little señora!" the woman exclaimed, "he has made me suffer so! I couldn't understand. I thought I had been harsh to him, because I have a rough soul, and I wrote to him, I sent my mother with notes to him, and he never replied. I did not understand; I didn't know anything about you. Then I heard about you and I understood why Luis had gone away from me. Señora! You have no right to him! He belongs to me! Don't you know that he belongs to me? Look, I'll swear to you on any of the blessed saints that he belongs to me! I'm his wife!"

Trembling, terrified, Altagracia listened, and without understanding each one of the woman's sobbed words she understood that Bustillos was not hers. The shock was profound because it did not signify alone the deception of a single individual, but the appalling deception of life itself. Suddenly Altagracia knew that life had its face of deep shame, and she was shown this face now instead of that romantic countenance seen during all her other hours.

Her throat felt tight; she wondered if she would scream. The face of the other woman disappeared; she never knew in what way it passed from her eyes. She found, with a touch of detached surprise, that she was walking on the street and knew that she was going to her uncle. She did not remember leaving the house. It seemed natural that she had left that place, and no thought of a return came into her mind.

Martinez, taking his ease in a thickly cushioned chair, was amazed when he saw Altagracia enter. His amazement was an obvious reaction to her face; she was almost unrecognizable, for the distress and above all the veil of stupefaction expressed in her features formed no part of his life-long knowledge of her face.

"Santo Dios!" he cried. "*Niña!* What has happened?"

The girl dropped into a chair and stared at her uncle with the expression common to those whose recognitions are clouded with the fog of dementia.

"Luis is married," she muttered.

Martinez stared.

"I saw his wife . . ."

Her uncle began to question her. Finally he learned of the girl Carmen, of the things she had said to Altagracia. Little by little he learned the story of Luis' cruelties.

For several seconds he was silent and then, resuming his cushioned chair, he took one of the girl's hands and pressed it tenderly.

"*Niña,*" he said, "you are a woman now and so you must know what belongs to a woman's life. *Niña,* everything is not kind in life, but it hurts me that life has been unkind to you so soon. You are a woman now and you will see many things that I had hoped you might not see, but you must close your eyes just as you would close your eyes if you were walking on the street and the wind blew the dirt of the street up into your face."

He paused; it troubled him to see no change in the stupefaction of her features, but in a moment he went on, hoping that she would understand.

"The woman tried to frighten you," he said. "She saw how young you are, and how little you know and perhaps she thought there was some advantage to gain by frightening you. Forget that you have ever seen her. She has no claim on Luis now. Don't believe her when she tells you so, for it is not the truth. Luis must see her and arrange that she never troubles you again. You must go home and forget. Rest here a while, and then go home to Luis. Don't fear anything now, *niña.* Go to your little

room here and rest and then when you feel rested I'll take you home to Luis."

With a mechanical obedience Altagracia arose and moved slowly toward the door. Again Martinez was troubled by the strangeness of her face, the expression that did not alter under the soothing quietness of his words.

As she paused at the door he spoke to her again.

"Altagracia," he said, "do you remember the stories I used to tell you about your dead cousin Josephina? Do you remember the old hacienda I took you to see when you were a little girl? Do you remember how brave Josephina was and how she met her misfortune? In El Sombrero they have never forgotten her, you remember? She is still in our old hacienda there, they think—you must be as brave as Josephina! Altagracia, let poor Josephina help you!"

CHAPTER XII

He saw her leave the room and he thought that perhaps his reference to the legendary Josephina might have been an inspiration, for Altagracia was romantic and a romantic appeal might help her. He did not recognize Altagracia's condition, and so did not imagine that her demented confusion would find a literal significance in his words.

But the story of Josephina began to form in her mind like the shape of an obsession. Passing through the house she paused at the little room that had been hers for many years and here she thought of El Sombrero and Josephina who still persisted there; her uncle had just told her that Josephina was still in the old hacienda at El Sombrero. Everything that had been said of Josephina came into her mind until the vision of the dead girl was recreated in her senses. She moved in the heroic proportions of a myth; Josephina was strong, Josephina was courageous. No one could understand her; Josephina could understand.

Then she thought that her uncle had commanded her to go back to Luis. She began to tremble fearfully. She could not go back to Luis. Luis was not there, Luis was not hers.

Turning with a sudden resolve, she ran out to the patio, and under the urge of her mad resolution, crossed beneath the palms, passed through the *corredor*, and escaped from the house.

No one accosted her as she half walked and half ran toward the westward road from the city. For the first time in days her senses were exalted. Meanwhile, her mind was occupied with a practical problem. She was trying to remember half-forgotten facts learned in the convent classes, locations, the names of villages, distances. . . . An assurance began to give her strength.

Her disappearance was not discovered until the following morning, when Martinez, in search of Bustillos, called at her home and found that she was absent. Quickly apprehensive, he telephoned to all of her friends; no one had seen her. Bustillos was not in the house.

Later in the day, when the news of her disappearance began to move as a rumour through the city, a former gardener of Martinez's, now employed at Miraflores, telephoned that he had seen Altagracia passing through Miraflores late the preceding afternoon. The gardener said that he had called to her because it seemed strange to him that she was at Miraflores alone, and he said that she had turned and smiled at him, and this reassured him and he thought that she must be visiting a friend nearby.

That evening the papers published the startling news of her flight. No one knew where she had gone, no one understood. Bustillos was not to be found.

Hernandez joined Martinez and together they set out to begin the rounds of all the places where Bustillos might possibly be discovered. The two old men visited all the cafés; no one had seen Bustillos.

"This will be his last escapade," muttered Hernandez. "We will find him and then I will see His Excellency. We will bring a charge against him. The charge does not matter. That is one of the virtues of our country, *amigo*. We

have means of ridding ourselves of our enemies."

That night they found Bustillos in a house near the Puente Hierro.

He was incoherently drunk, but they pulled him out of the door, dragged him down the steps, and began to walk with him along the dim streets near the Iron Bridge. Hernandez supported him by one arm, Martinez dragged him along by the other. He hung between them, like a stuffed dummy, his uncertain feet stumbling across the pavements like defective parts of a mechanical device.

Neither Hernandez nor his friend spoke a word. Once or twice Bustillos complained; they jerked him forward; he was helpless. The streets were quiet and their footfalls sounded noisily and occasionally a passerby paused to look after them and laughed when he saw them disappear down the vista of the street. The cool evening wind from the Avila blew against their faces, tossing about the disordered hair on Bustillos' heavy head.

Finally they stopped, released him, and Hernandez stood in front of him with his white moustaches moving in the breeze like menacing tusks.

He pushed his face close to the eyes of their captive.

"Do you know me, drunkard?" he asked.

"What do you want, Hernandez?" muttered the prisoner.

"*Bueno!* Where is your wife?" demanded the old man.

Bustillos shrugged his shoulders.

"You don't know! Neither do we know. Idiot! But you and I are going to find her. You and I are going to find her!"

"Let me alone," mumbled Bustillos.

Hernandez seized his arm and in the dim light his figure seemed to loom tall and ominous as if all the hazards of his long life suddenly entered into his frame, making him larger, more impressive.

"Listen, cretin!" he whispered. "I have seen men sit in the same cell for twenty years until they forgot their names and all their friends forgot them. Do you understand?"

Bustillos raised his eyes and looked into the implacable eyes of the old man before him. He lowered his face; a faint shiver passed across his shoulders.

The trio resumed their march along the street.

When they reached Martinez's home Bustillos was nearly sober. They locked him in a room and a servant guarded the door during the night with a rusty *machete* dropped across his knees.

The next morning the driver of an ox-team, coming into the city, reported that he had seen a young girl walking beyond the city on the road to El Sombrero.

Martinez remembered his last words to Altagracia.

That morning, Bustillos, under a threat he could not disregard, set out for El Sombrero.

CHAPTER XIII

It was late in the afternoon when he arrived at the little village, and going to the *rancheria* he inquired if a strange girl had come there. After they had stared at him for a time they shook their heads and several men laughed. Bustillos scowled at them and they swallowed their laughs in their glasses of *aguardiente*.

Luis was tired. He was apprehensive, he was afraid, he remembered the threats of Hernandez, and he recognized the power of the old politico. Moreover, he was intensely angry.

He sat down in a chair and ordered a drink. Swallowing the liquor, he sat morosely before his empty glass wondering what next step he might take. No one had seen the girl in El Sombrero. Of course not! These people were the very books of rumour; it was useless to inquire elsewhere in the village. A wild hypothesis backed by a threat had driven him to this place. He had been made a fool of. But he was afraid to return.

He ordered another drink—

Presently his spirits revived. The chill of his senses, that had been almost a physical chill, departed and something of his customary aplomb was restored to him.

He glanced about the dim, shabby room. The faces of the drinkers began to amuse him, and he stared from one face to another with the effrontery and assurance of a superior man.

At one of the tables he saw a small group of natives betting at cards.

He arose, crossed to the table and stood behind the players watching them. Presently he drew up a chair, sat at the table, and ordered *aguardiente* for everyone. He proposed a vulgar toast; they laughed; they drank with him; they clapped him on the back. He began to play with them in the game.

As Bustillos' spirits expanded his tongue became looser.

"*Hombres*," he said, "this is the best company in the world. Learn from the wisdom of a man who has seen much of life. Spend your time with men and avoid women. Understand, I don't counsel you to be afraid of women and keep out of their way on that account. Avoid them because they will waste your time and lead you into folly. If you must needs have an association with a woman, make sure that you beat her sufficiently and so establish yourself beyond doubt as her master. Ah, *hombres?*"

A young fellow with a large, flat face, thick lips, and drooping eyes, raised his face from his glass and laughed in silly chuckles.

"Oh, señor," he muttered, grinning and chuckling, "but there's a woman even *you* would be afraid of!"

"Eh, *cabron!* Who is that?"

"Our *espiritu*, señor. No man has ever had the best of her. There's José Lopez. José, let us see your old potato-face. José, you remember what happened to Juan Pedrazza? He went to the hacienda to see about our *espiritu*. Well, Señor José will tell you that no one ever saw Juan Pedrazza again. Por Dios! He went out like a candle! They never found so much as his old boots!"

An old man began to speak.

"*Si*, señor, that's nothing but the truth, by the blessed saints. Last night I saw her myself. I hadn't seen her before since I was a boy, although there's many another honest fellow has seen her between that time and now and confessed it to our padre. Last night I passed along by the old hacienda and I saw her pass the windows of the *sala*. I saw her, or the devil can have me to burn!"

One by one they began to tell Bustillos the story of Josèphina. The old man reiterated his declaration that he had seen her the night before. With each fresh glass of *aguardiente* the legend was enlarged. Innumerable names were mentioned, innumerable corroborations offered.

Bustillos listened and said nothing. He watched the red, flat faces and the earnestness of their expressions amused him. He began to laugh. He caught up his glass, swallowed the liquor, and sprang to his feet. The glass dropped from his fingers and broke into little pieces on the stone floor.

"Well then!" he cried. "Here's an adventure! I've many a question to ask this spirit. Never was afraid of any woman living, *hombres!* I'm a gentleman. *Caballero, si!* Don Luis Bustillos de la Luz. Who'll go with me to the hacienda?"

No one spoke, no one moved. Bustillos looked down at the blurred, startled faces and laughed.

"Wait for me here, *hombres*," he cried. "I'll bring you a lock of her hair!"

He stumbled toward the door and was about to pass out when an old man sprang up, and running toward him, seized the edges of his coat-tails.

Bustillos swung about angrily and struck the old man across the face. The old man stumbled back into the room and Bustillos passed out into the road.

They waited, but he did not return. No one was surprised. All the old

stories were revived, all the old tales retold. Two men began to fight with knives in an argument over the number of victims claimed by the wraith, and were separated by their companions.

Long after midnight groups of men stumbled to their *morichales*, avoiding the road that passed by the ruined hacienda.

In the morning half a dozen armed men, frightened and reluctant, set out with the *jefe cival* to search the hacienda. They passed through the empty frame of the old door with their boots resounding in the hollow *corredor*.

In the deserted sala they found Bustillos, the stranger, with his own jewelled knife thrust through his heart.

CHAPTER XIV

It was night when Altagracia reached the village of El Sombrero and the roads were deserted. She passed the rancheria, and saw the lights within and remembered dimly seeing this place years before. Now she was certain that the village was El Sombrero.

Passing beyond the rancheria, she saw a ruined hacienda looming dimly through the broken trunks of a dead cocoanut grove. Her heart beat rapidly. This was the old hacienda of her family; here she would find Josephina!

She ran up through the silent grove and her white dress made a blurred moving mist in the darkness. She found the door of the hacienda and entered. The echo of her footsteps sounded loudly in the empty rooms, but she was not frightened. A great peace seemed to have come into her confused mind. Now she was near Josephina; Josephina was strong!

Crouching in the empty salon she waited through the night, and toward morning she fell into an exhausted sleep.

When she awakened another twilight was settling into darkness.

Her body ached; numb tinglings oppressed her. She was hungry, but now some foreboding, a dreadful doubt, made her fear to leave the silence of her retreat. Suppose Josephina would come during her absence? Several times she spoke the name of her dead cousin aloud and the walls echoed it back into her ears, as if in mockery.

In her physical distress she began to doze again, awakening time after time to find herself alone in the dark, empty room.

Finally she awakened for the last time and her startled senses recorded a sound of footfalls in the next room. Her first fright passed into a swift exultation as her assurance returned. At last Josephina was coming to her!

She arose swiftly and all the numb pain seemed to pass out of her body as her blood ran a race through her veins. She moved toward the door; the sound of footsteps ceased.

With her head thrown back and her golden hair falling, in the metamorphosis of night, in black masses about her cheeks and shoulders, she walked over the threshold and entered the ancient *sala*.

A figure was swaying uncertainly at the other end of the room. In an instant Altagracia perceived her terrible mistake. It was a man's figure standing there; Josephina had not come.

She did not recognize Bustillos, and he did not see his wife in the spectral figure that stood just within the empty frame of the door. On entering the *sala* he had heard the noise of her steps in the adjoining room and in startled fear he withdrew his knife from the sheath beneath his belt.

Then the white figure appeared.

Bustillos thought that his heart had ceased to beat. All the recently accounted tales of the wraith crowded terribly into his recollections and he found himself face to face with a frightful actuality. For a moment his fingers continued to grasp the jewelled blade, and then the nerves relaxed, the weapon fell out of his hand and the light of the remote stars glittered on it for a moment as it dropped swiftly to the floor.

In this second Altagracia remembered Josephina's tragic end. No one

knew how many men had assailed her in her room, but she had prevailed against them all. Like Josephina she too was assailed, and now, alone with this menacing, swaying figure, she faced the moment of her supreme peril. She saw the flash of the distant stars shine for an instant on the steel blade as it dropped from her assailant's hand.

Then she was strong. By an atavistic strength she felt assured, unafraid. The spirit of Josephina came into her senses like the inspiration of a great act. With a low cry to the Holy Mother she darted across the room, stooped to the floor, secured the blade, and rising to her feet thrust it into the body of the swaying figure whose breath panted into her flying hair.

She saw the face of the man fall back, she saw his knees collapse and as he tumbled backward her startled eyes saw the face of Luis Bustillos.

CHAPTER XV

SEVERAL weeks later a girl was found wandering the streets of the seaport of Curaçao. No one knew whence she came and the girl herself could not tell them. It was obvious that her memory was at fault, and otherwise her mind was somewhat clouded.

She was cared for by the Sisters of Mercy. When the Mother Superior saw her the girl's condition was suitable for their merciful ministrations. Her clothes were torn, her shoes were worn through, she was sick and weak.

In the convent her strength slowly returned and with the return of her strength something of the confusion of her mind seemed to pass. Still, she could never explain her history. When questioned by the Reverend Mother she shook her head. Sometimes the Reverend Mother wondered if the child could be purposely keeping a secret that in the beginning she had been actually unable to divulge.

The girl began to help the nuns and in the end she became a postulant. Her novitiate passed without unusual event and on the day of her admission to the orders the Reverend Mother talked to her and said:

"Dear child, everything of your old life is over now like the bad hour of a dream. Whatever memories you have you must forget, for they have no place in your heart now. I will not ask you again what your memories may be or what you found to hurt you in the past and no one within these walls will ever ask you again."

The Reverend Mother looked at her and felt that she had a secret and hoped that she would forget.

The new sister took the name of Sister Virginia.

One day, at recreation hour, Sister Virginia was sitting with the nuns whilst they were telling the little tales with which they amused themselves. Someone told a tale about a brave girl who had saved the life of a child.

Then Sister Virginia told the story of a girl who had preserved her honour against a dozen men. Sister Virginia said that this girl had lived many years before, that her name was Josephina, and she said Josephina's work was not finished with her death, but that many believed her spirit still persisted in its old strength and courage to avenge the outraged distress of any who might appeal to her.

The sisters clapped their hands and declared that Sister Virginia's story was better than any of the others, and they said that Sister Virginia must tell them more of the girl named Josephina when they told stories together again.

THE difference between married men and single men is that to a single man all women are attractive, and to a married man all women but one.

THEY COMFORT ME!

By Billie Shaw

THEY tell me that I shall know my dead love again, that our spirits will be reunited some day. His body is but a shell now, they say, a meaningless bit of clay. But what can there be in Heaven that will mean to me what the touch of his lips has meant? And I shall never again see the boyishness of his neck, nor pull and kiss the lobes of his ears! In the solemnity of spiritland, dare we call each other the foolish pet-names understood only by ourselves? The waves of his hair are infinitely more desirable to me than the thought-waves they tell me will pass between us; the sewing of buttons on his things a dearer rite than the sewing of good deeds that they declare will draw us closer. They say *he* is not here, only his clay! But his dear earthly body is more to me than his rarefied spirit, purged, perhaps, of the very imperfections that I loved. Gone forever are his aggressive way of protecting me, his childish love of petting, his funny masculine vanities, for these are all of the earth earthy.

And they think that they bring comfort when they say that some day we shall meet in the spirit.

WESTERN TWILIGHT

By May Greenwood

THE mist's great pearl has drowned the opal light
Of sunset flaming on the outer sea;
The twilight walks the hills: her mystery
Withholds this hour from the enfolding night.

A slender sail that haunts the gleaming bay
Is hidden by an evanescent rain
That brings the sea-born wind; a golden stain
Now widens where the sunset city lay.

The silence comes to haunt this western shore;
Great stars and the awakened seas are white
With beauty deeper than our love's delight
That Time and Silence hold for evermore.

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

By Amanda Benjamin Hall

I

HE hopped like Puck over a barberry hedge, caught on a briar and spat a raw "Damn!" But even the pricks were not so bad as the bedlam from which he had come, so his humour was presently restored and he wandered with much pathetic complacence into the rich new lady's garden. It was unexplored territory, but impudently, whimsically, he intended to conquer it. Rich and proper ladies never have children to fill the air with sounds like shrapnel, and they never have dogs to take the offensive, so he was reasonably safe. . . .

Home had been a riot that morning. The nestlings were not only a-twitter at dawn, but alive and aggressive. At six-thirty they had descended to the culinary regions of the old farmhouse where the Finleys elected to live, procured for themselves mammoth slices of bread besprinkled with sugar, and, reascending, swarmed over poor Finley where he lay in the conjugal chamber, making his bed all crumby and chaotic. At seven Dorcas rose sweetly (she was always sweet in a patient, devitalized way), dressed the six and prepared herself for a day's visit to a nearby relation. While she did so, Finley, reluctantly routed, shambled down to make the kitchen fire, his long, irregular artist's fingers bleak with cold, his coat collar high, his hair bristling. It was the last day of May, but the mornings were still nakedly chilly. After that he milked the cow, making all allowance for the creature's temperament, fried eggs as for an army, mended the sink pipe and helped Dorcas catch her train.

"Keep an eye on them," she had begged haggardly from the train-step, and he had said that he would.

He walked home cross-lots to his squatty old house at the edge of Lyme, and there found the children working up momentum for the day. They were of all types—leanly-temperamental, beefy-phlegmatic and the intermediate kinds. Those that did not have Finley's water-spaniel eyes had bulging calves, freckles, and were lacking in awe for God or man. They swarmed upon him and battered down everything—initiative, beauty, solitude for work. And Finley would get quite indignant about it—mad like a child with no weapon of defence. His sense of humour was not adjustable on this subject; he couldn't turn it inward, and when they had him at bay he would moan impotently:

"I'll run away and never come back!"

That was what he had done this morning while they whooped and bedevilled him and tried to tie a rope to his leg. He had grabbed his sketch-box instinctively and made off with it in a goblin manner, as though it were the pot o' gold at the end of the rainbow. And the youngsters had pursued him across two fields and half of a third, panting like sportsmen afield, "He'll never take the hedge!" But Finley *had* taken the hedge, so they fell back foiled, their mother having taught them boundaries. Finley had thereby accomplished a great coup and glowed with the sense of emancipation. It was one of those golden days in the life of a creator when he feels genius in his finger-tips and a giddy wonder at his own endowment.

He was trespassing now. This was a

private estate. This was not the free ground of Old Lyme where pleasantly demented painters like himself could wander as Adam and Eve in the age of their innocence. This garden bore the mark of the Hicksons and Harry Collinses of the landscape trade, and was the playground of one Olivia Caruthers, whom the law had daintily freed and who now walked here in the morning and languished for applause. She was much richer than anyone in Old Lyme, and could paint nothing but her face. Therefore she went unnoticed and unmolested. When Finley achieved his spectacular vault over the hedge she reacted immediately and favourably.

She was a property-owner, and property-owners adore to be trespassed upon. Some love apologies and others the power to prosecute. Olivia Caruthers loved the former; that was the psychology of her hedge. She wore a white house dress of wool and a long white cape of nunlike sobriety. She had Titian hair and a million dollars (think of it!), a magnolia complexion, and still no second husband. Sometimes she could scarcely credit it herself!

Though their discovery was mutual, their impressions, perforce, were opposed. Finley saw her as a composition among the carefully manicured roses and the tentative tulips, and his artistic fibre was set to vibrating. Just as she stood she was a thing for canvas, and he was immediately matching her to all the colours on his mental palette.

But Finley's first appeal to her was as a comedy figure. Judge for yourself! He hadn't had time to shave that morning, not to talk of his hair; he was tall with an economy of flesh, angular and homely, his nose got in front of his face, he had a thin-lipped, astonished mouth, and wild, reticent, melting brown eyes. The baby had wiped its eggy fin on his vest. But Finley was great! He lived all the year round in Old Lyme, handicapped, harrowed, working painfully, while his colleagues returned to the city in the Fall to mingle with masters and catch the contagion of thought. Nevertheless Finley stayed great and was growing greater every year. Olivia Caruthers knew him by reputation and recognized him by his sketch-box and his untidiness.

"Good-morning," she inclined her head amusedly. "It's such a pity you didn't enter by the gate and arrive unscathed." And he, divining her genial attitude, played up to it with:

"If I had I'd been caught." Then it occurred to him to remove his hat, and he felt, to find that he had none, only a horn or two of dark, scapegrace hair. So he smiled instead and at once she was swayed toward him because he possessed the indefinable something that women court. "I was running away," he explained quickly—"fugitive from justice—that sort of thing."

"Indeed?" Her concise eyebrows made two inverted "v's." Her teeth were small and white like seeds and showed continuously between her slightly painted lips. Everything about her had been made the most of and she was really a complete modern beauty, done up in tissue and tied with a bow. "What, may I ask, was your crime that you are obliged to flee from justice?" He pondered a moment, then said:

"I brought six youngsters into the world and they're all trying to get even."

When they had finished laughing it will readily be seen that they were well established along the road of friendship.

"Have you any—" began Finley as though begging confidence, but ended, "dogs?"

"Yes, a Pekinese and a Chow."

"I knew it," was the omniscient remark. "But then I can't talk to you about babies, the jolly little brutes."

"No," she admitted ruefully, "I suppose not," and was disappointed in him for being such a thorough father.

Nevertheless the needle of her feminine interest was behaving oddly in the presence of the masculine steel.

"But it—they must be so disturbing to genius!" she frowned, and he returned promptly:

"It—they are." He drew an eloquent hand through his hair. "My genius doesn't know itself from medio-

crity most of the time. Take to-day. I'm supposed to be shepherding the flock, but everything in me says to go forth and riot in colour."

"You need a protector," she sympathized charmingly, "a patroness, and a haven of refuge above all things. Suppose you let me supply them?"

"Will you?" His smile was haggard, for even at ten in the morning the day was shopworn. "Will you truly?"

He looked about at the pretty, sequestered garden, all rhyme and reason, at the tiny pavilions where one could sit with one's nerves and recuperate. He felt pleasantly pathetic, luxuriously relaxed like a convalescent, and a bit Oriental perhaps over the finding of the woman so deliciously tricked out with hair and eyes.

"Then you'll let me stay a couple of hundred years," he cried whimsically, "and do many masterpieces."

They were hurrying, without any reason apparently, along the path that was of pink Italian soil shipped from New Jersey.

"Of course," she assented delightedly, not clear why she was hurrying, unless it were her instinct to preserve him from the inconvenient offspring that might follow.

He was the one attractive man she had met in Old Lyme, in all that circle of temperamentals whose very democracy was arrogant. The entire spring had passed insipidly for Olivia, and if she were not soon admired she would need a change of climate, a burglary or a lawsuit to bring her round.

"Where are we going?" he asked enchantedly after she had manœuvred him about like a disk in a game of parchesi.

"Rather, what are you going to paint?" she countered excitedly, floating along beside him with the sun like a spider in the web of her hair.

"You, of course," he answered naturally. "Is there anything else?" reviving a gallantry long ago fallen into disuse. "Only I'm afraid I can't paint you walking. I might stub my toe."

Olivia laughed musically. Her sense of humour was an arrested growth, but she had learned canny tricks, that men love laughter and that by lowering the head when so doing the little lower teeth show to great advantage.

"Are you serious? Do you go in for portraits?"

He wagged his head like "old dog Tray," already beginning to see her in terms of proportion, colour and line.

"I not only go in for portraits but I come out smiling," he boasted unaffectedly. "I am one of the best in the trade. Will you trust me?"

"Good gracious, yes," she said genially. "We'll go into the sun-parlour then and I'll exercise my only genius, one for making people comfortable. I'm Mrs. Caruthers, you know."

"Are you?" he asked politely, but letting the name remain like a parcel on his mental doorstep. "I only recognized a slight resemblance to the Queen of Sheba."

She glowed, a combination of rose madder and chrome orange, he reflected, as she led him across a terrace and into her glass-enclosed morning-room. There a trap was set for the sunlight, and there it was caught and imprisoned. Olivia had plants, ferns of amazing, intricate variety; she had a row of cages, in every one of which stood a tiny yellow canary, for all the world like ladies of the chorus, twittering on their feet. She had wicker furniture with let-me-die-here cushions of chintz; she had steam heat for cold mornings.

Finley hadn't realized how sick he was till the maid appeared with perfect mechanics, and served them coffee and other delectable dainties. But he realized that to the maid he must appear a rather curious trophy of her mistress's bow and spear.

"You're very good to me," he could only marvel over the steaming cup, and Olivia answered with peaceful triteness:

"Nonsense, you poor fugitive genius. It's only that I know what you need to make the wheels go round. You want mothering for a bit. But soon you shall start your sketch and I will sit trying not to look as flattered as I feel."

He scarcely heard her, because he

was concentrating upon her so deeply. She saw her own reflection in either of his eyes and knew her personal stock soaring.

"Are you prepared for something more serious than a sketch, Mrs.—Mrs.—"

"Caruthers," she flushed reproachfully, but Finley did not apologize.

"Because I perceive that I shall wish to give weeks to painting you. You have many qualifications—poise, grace, restraint—" To Olivia's keen disappointment he broke off almost before he began. The mind sitting behind her porcelain face was a greedy little despot, commanding always, "More, more—" When she counted her coins of praise her fingers were palsied like a miser's.

"Please paint me lingeringly," she murmured adroitly, pinching a roll in her dawn-pink hand. "Please make me beautiful and charge me a great price, Mr. Finley. Then I shall be entirely satisfied."

"I'll paint you as you are," he declared with innocent obtuseness, for with all his dexterity he was incapable of flirtation. "And I'll begin by some experimental work here and now."

The morning drained away all gold and smooth like Benedictine, and left a sweet taste in the mouths of both. Although Olivia did not understand the sketch, which was suggestive and inadequate, she hoped for better things later on. She kept Finley for luncheon and showed him the brocades and velvets of her interior decoration, while Finley showed her the velvet lining of his soul and some of the workings of his ingenious, negligent brain. Olivia would have preferred to have him talk about her beauty, but consoled herself with the thought that he would warm to that theme later on.

She pictured it all, the dear conquest, the personal passion he would develop for her. She saw the discarded palette and Finley at her feet, "Olivia, Olivia, my dream-woman!". She dallied with the dénouement; she would bring him into recognition, consolidating his every gain. Relieved of financial worry and the burden of his family, where might he not attain? She would of course provide for his family and be personally interested in the upbringing of his children. Poor, tired Mrs. Finley would no doubt thank her in the end.

II

At six o'clock that evening Finley is discovered still in the toils of the siren but entertaining a violent chimera of conscience—Dorcas hanging from the train-step that morning and exhorting him to keep an eye on the children. He rose precipitately, undone with remorse.

"I've forgotten my children. I've left them all day. Oh, my God, I must get back. I may not have any children by now. Dorcas went away and left them in my care. What a slipshod brute I am! Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!"

He had reached the door, Olivia protesting after him.

"It can't be so bad," she pointed out. "If anything had happened we'd have heard of it. Anyway, I'll come with you. I insist."

He paid no heed, only hurried all the faster, looking like an interpretation of the west wind. Olivia, taking two steps to his one, could barely keep up. They stepped from her garden down into the lush meadow, picture-book green with drifts of forget-me-not flecking its long undulations like foam in mid-ocean. Finley was figuratively wringing his hands.

"Why did she trust me?" he deplored darkly. "She might have known from past experience how unfitted for responsibility I am!" And all at once, mindful of the craziness she would probably find, "You'd better go back," he told her with a tragic momentousness. "You'd better go back, Mrs.—Mrs.—"

"Call me Olivia," she suggested with a pout which was lost upon him. "You may be able to remember that. And," grimly, "I'm coming. . . . You'll need a woman to help you out."

Finley regarded her helplessly. If his embarrassment, the confession of his wretched state would contribute to her happiness, so be it. What it did not

occur to him to guess was that her curiosity consumed her. Finley led her through the long grass of the door-yard and into the old, grey, weather-frosted house where a clump of lilacs billowed softly at the door. The scene set was the kitchen, a room not without a certain rough nobility. A frieze of sketches ran round the wall, the furniture was of good New England tradition but entirely nude of finish. There had been an attempt at an ordered effect, but this attempt had long ago succumbed to muddle.

The children were there, come home to roost, and it was interesting to see how they had done for themselves. The two oldest ones, aged twelve and fourteen, had lighted a kerosene lamp with a tarnished chimney and were pottering about the stove. A fat little boy and a fat little girl with a head-cold were playing at coach with two chairs, canopied by a very soiled pink evening wrap, evidently belonging to their mother's haloed past, a flag flying on Calvary. The baby, tucked into a high chair, was rioting with a collection of spoons, door-knobs, bits of bread, a monkey wrench and a tin cup. About him on the floor was the lordly litter of his distractions. In one corner, aloof from the rest, a pensive little girl of seven nursed her doll and looked up at the newcomers with Finley's heartbreaking eyes.

"I want something to eat," she appealed hopefully, yet hopelessly.

The cow hooked its head about the door frame and mooed wretchedly for the discomfort of going unmilked. Finley threw up his hands in final surrender, seized a pail and plunged out. Olivia lifted her skirts for all the world as though crossing a mud puddle and approached the child on the floor.

"Can't you give your little sister something to eat?" She took the cooks to task severely and the chief cook answered:

"The mush is a little burned but it will have to do. She can have some and go to bed. She's tired—that's what."

Feeling herself at once competent and charitable, the beauteous lady found a dish, filled it with porridge and ministered to the one who most resembled her father.

"Fanks, fanks so much," the youngster effused piously, and reached with a sticky hand to pat the beauteous lady's face, but that, as Olivia explained quite carefully, was shocking bad form. Good little girls must always remember to wash their hands before feeling affectionate. Whereupon the tot yawned disinclination to go to the sink and asked, "Would spit do?"

"I'll put you to bed at once," condescended Olivia hastily, "and you can wash in the morning."

But Tillie objected.

"I can do that mythelf. I don't take off much cuz the sheets get frosty." But she slid out of her shift, kicked off her shoes and taking a shawl from the kitchen lounge explained, "Thith is to wrap round my feet."

"I see." Still gasping, Olivia turned to see Finley charging through the doorway with his pail of milk. There seemed to be not very much of it; what there was floated straws and débris, but he looked as if he had been through tremendous exertion.

"I'd like to know who put the cat in the ice-box," he challenged forlornly, and the fat boy promptly answered:

"I did, Dad, to cool off after Tillie put it in the oven."

"Great Jehovah!" ejaculated Finley, and turning to Olivia:

"You see," he flung a broad gesture, "you see!" And it was patent that she did. "If Dorcas were home," he lied loyally, "everything would be all right. Dorcas—"

Outside was heard the light respiration of a Ford and all stampeded to the window.

"It's her. . . . It's Mom." Finley, arching over their heads, verified the arrival and breathed, ironically:

"Thanks be to Thee, O God, from whom all blessings flow."

III

Olivia found that her heart was beating rather fast. The fact that men

like Finley have wives is constant cause for resentment by women like Olivia. Yet Olivia was pleasantly aware that she made a spot of beauty in the muddy interior like a rose that springs from a cranny of a dark courtyard. Surely there would be a contrast to smite him. For a mother of six children is bound to be—a mother of six children! Would he mind his wife finding her there? Would he make embarrassed explanations? She hoped so, feeling that she would enjoy them. But no. He held open the door, for a minute inviting only darkness, then:

"At last," he said in a tone of sanity. "Did Thompson bring you over? I knew he'd meet that train so I didn't bother." The comfortable, conventional lie was comfortably and conventionally accepted.

Entered Dorcas Finley, the wife of the most talented artist in Old Lyme, the partner of his poverty. So quiet was the little woman, so negligible, so shabby, so lacking in a pretence to beauty, that even the ambitious Olivia was satisfied. Mrs. Finley had high cheek bones, poorly covered in flesh, passive eyebrows and eyes that asked nothing of the world. Although there was a lift toward humour about the nose the mouth gave up hope of it, and her hair showing beneath her hat was composed of a half dozen wavering lines in Indian ink. The hat itself would scarcely have done for one of Olivia's maids. Apparently some sort of bird had died on it and never been removed.

Olivia felt herself glittering, almost intolerably lovely by comparison. She waited for Mrs. Finley's surprise. But Mrs. Finley betrayed no flicker more than as though beautifully gowned women were accustomed to appear in her kitchen like the genie from the vase. Finley said eagerly:

"Dorcas, this is Mrs.—Mrs.—"

"Caruthers," supplied Olivia wryly, and he had the grace to blush.

"To be sure. And this is my wife, Mrs. Caruthers." Then, boyishly, "I'm going to do her portrait, Dorcas."

Dorcas smiled faintly and Olivia felt her small but strongly sincere hand.

"I'm happy to meet you, Mrs. Caruthers," drawled Mrs. Finley with perfect composure, protecting herself from the children the while. But instead of thanking Olivia for the benefit she was about to confer upon the house of Finley she took the attitude, "You're very fortunate, I'm sure. He does so few. You must have inspired him unusually."

Olivia was affronted. Used as she was to the finesse, the sarcasm of society women, she misconstrued Mrs. Finley's intention. But soon she was intelligent enough to know that she was wrong. Finley and his wife were fussing over her with such exquisite, artistic enjoyment, such childish, unalloyed pleasure.

"See, Dorcas," he pointed out, "the wide setting of the eyes, the shape of the outer corner and the splendid way the hair grows on the temples. Doesn't it make you think of Romney's Lady Hamilton sketches? Wouldn't you say her flesh tone has a good deal of blue and green beneath it?"

Mrs. Finley's soft, sleepy eyes were innocent of guile.

"Exactly. Very nice, very nice indeed. You'll do her three-quarters, I suppose?"

"I haven't decided. I'd thought at first of a sitting portrait, full length and handled very simply with a lot of freshness."

"Like the Cecelia Beaux thing of the girl in grey," suggested his wife. Then, tenderly, "But you must be very fatigued, Mrs. Caruthers, after lending yourself to the whims of this tireless man. You'll stay and take tea with us, of course?"

It was Olivia who was embarrassed. It staggered belief and yet the tone was convincing. Was this, after all, the perfect *savoir faire*, to be able to issue nonchalant invitations from the mêlée of such a household? Just then the cat shied across the kitchen with something tied to its tail.

"Thanks, I wouldn't dream of it," refused Olivia. "You have all these—er—dear children to tend to. But now

that we're neighbours we shall meet often, I daresay."

"Yes," returned Mrs. Finley in the same sweet, drawling voice, "we shall have the bond of the portrait. I hope you will be patient if it takes a long time. Hector, dear, take Mrs. Caruthers up the road."

"I intended to," replied Finley in top spirits, and as the two set out he drew Olivia's hand through his arm and gave it a little squeeze.

IV.

For hours that night Olivia lay in her bed with all its pride of trappings, trying to pick flaws in Mrs. Finley's cordiality. Poor soul, she called her now, and poor creature. It was pathetic how indifferent a man will become to that sort of wife. Was it possible the woman did not know enough to be jealous of so attractive a husband? Just because she had let herself become *hors de combat* was no reason why he should not look elsewhere. Anyway, she had no business to bring into the world so ridiculous a family and make ducks and drakes of her husband's future.

Olivia was more than ever certain of his greatness when, sponsored by his taste, Old Lyme accepted her unanimously and called her its first lady. Olivia would have liked to think of herself as a patroness of Art, but her common sense, inherited from a self-made father who manufactured suspenders, told her that it was Art which patronized her, and she was not ungrateful. She began feeding the impecunious and buying their pictures, not forgetting to spread the tale of her own beneficence. And while her portrait by Finley was in progress nature was likewise busied over a large canvas. The little brooks of Old Lyme ran clear, startled water, apple-trees were bridal and the classic Colonial church to be seen in nearly all galleries of New York pitched its tent against a warm, blue sky.

Olivia matched her gowns to the season and her mood to the weather. Finley came and went from her house in an oblivious, happy, erratic fashion, like an *enfant terrible* thrusting his hands in the jam, licking from his fingers all that was good. He nourished himself from her bounty and waxed sleek both mentally and physically. But he gave as simply and whole-heartedly as he took. He was affectionate in a comic, demonstrative, irresistible way. He kissed her fingers, he scolded or praised her, he brought her gifts of no intrinsic value—such curios as turtles, birdsnests, field flowers, bits of carven wood. And Olivia, who, instead, wanted kisses and adulation, made shift at understanding him. It was the only novel love-making in all her experience and she was torn between tears and laughter. Finley would lie on her *chaise-longe* and smoke and dream till she turned him out; he would finger the materials of her gowns with a pleasure that was almost fanatic.

Only one circumstance of their relationship was not perfect, and he managed to treat even this whimsically. According to his standards, the portrait was going very badly. Each time that it reached a stage where Olivia caught at immortality the relentless palette knife would sweep all the bloom from the canvas. Finley would apologize when this happened and kiss her fingers and promise that the next time it should remain. Her only consolation was in the thought that these many erasures prolonged their time together. And she believed him when he said that the fault lay at his door. Till one day all his playfulness dropped from him and under his whimsicality he was revealed in chain-armour from head to foot.

"No," he suddenly thundered, and Olivia thought that she saw a different man before her, so stern was he with the dignity of his art. The earth shook. "It is a lie, this picture. All of them have been lies, Olivia, damned lies. And now, by God, I'd better give it up, before I paint something you won't like."

Olivia was wholesomely terrified.

"But I don't understand," she pleaded with an instinct of self-preservation. It was as though Finley had threatened to cut her head off. "Please, please, this time let it remain.

It's so beautiful, Hector. It—it more than does me justice," and he caught her up fiercely (had he ever been playful?):

"That's exactly it. There's always the temptation to make you more beautiful than you are!"

Olivia mentally reeled. Then as the significance of what he was saying came home to her she grew to her full height, her trite blue eyes furiously kindled.

"So I'm not beautiful? Is that what you are trying to say? You've never admired me in the least. You've only hoodwinked me into believing you did. Very well, then, if I am so ugly in your sight release me from these tedious sittings and call the farce at an end."

Finley studied her gravely, not troubling to deny her accusations.

"I have painted you as you might be," he said, "not as you are, and I can't let such work stand. Don't you suppose I'm as disappointed as you?" Then, as though speaking to himself, "I have painted you like a living, loving soul, whereas in reality you are like something that has already been painted."

"How?" she almost shrieked.

"How?" he shrugged. "How can I tell you? Why did you divorce your husband?"

She forgot to be angry.

"We had different ideas about spending money. He was too proud to live on the luxuries I provided; he said my fortune came between us. So we quarrelled."

"That's just it," snapped Finley, "you've been spoiled and a lovely work of art has been spoiled with you. The trouble is that you've never loved anyone better than yourself."

It was proof of the power he wielded that she let him flay her, that real tears trembled to her lashes and her bright lips were like a flower that is crushed.

"Then you do care for beauty?" she wept. "Even if our definitions don't agree."

He said ruefully:

"Beauty can have its way with me. It's a sort of fetish."

She saw that he was grimly setting his sketch-box to rights and rinsing out his brushes. She panted hungrily for the smell of turpentine that would soon be gone. Her heart was racing.

"You're not going to give it up, Hector?" What she meant was, "You're not going to give me up?"

But though his water-spaniel eyes were regretful, the mouth stayed hard.

"After what I've said could you wish me to go on? No, accept what I say in the spirit I say it. As you are, you are not worth painting, Olivia. If you ever change—" And in a brisk tone, "Forget the portrait and let us be friends."

She thought her life was draining away. She sank back against the honey-coloured cushions and closed her eyes. His cruelty was the only thing that had ever touched her, the only hurt against which she had no defence. And while she was praying for strength he clicked the sketch-box together, turned, and in passing lay a hand on her shoulder. She felt it warm through the thin chiffon of her frock and longed to nestle her cheek against it. It was pagan how she wanted Finley. But Finley left her.

V

THEREAFTER she passed through innumerable days of appalling length, and each was like the taste of tin. Once she encountered Mrs. Finley in the village. Mrs. Finley, "a rag and a bone," all eyes and blue faded gingham. She would like to have escaped, but the other pursued and pressed a handshake upon her. The drowsy eyes were full of knowledge and regret, humiliating to Olivia.

"How are your six children," she revenged herself by asking, "and poor Mr. Finley? Is he still in quest of the perfect model?"

Mrs. Finley could not decide whether or not she ought to be offended.

"It was just that Hector's hand was out," she breathed faintly. "He was sorry—so sorry—" Then with a little list of pride, "His portraits are the sensation of any exhibit."

"Well, tell him," said Olivia with a harsh laugh, "that something has hap-

pened *since* to make me feel the sittings might be resumed. Ask him if he will call and see me this evening. Most important!"

Mrs. Finley let her eyes rest patiently in Olivia's hot, restless ones. They were eyes that would not let themselves be judging.

"Very well," she answered quietly, and slipped away.

The day was enervating. Olivia thought of Finley wallowing in paint and domesticity and she languished for the evening. But she was careful to conserve her energies. After resting for hours she took a little walk and returned to make a careful toilette. Her drawing-room gave upon the terrace and the furniture was shrouded in cool slip covers of lavender linen. The walls, of a pale antique brown, bore Japanese prints of faint design. Bowls of blue and pink flowers, roses and forget-me-nots were arranged on the bare tables. The long windows framed twilight. Olivia lay on a lavender lounge, frankly *intrigante* in a chiffon thing the colour of a lemon, and she waited with exquisite impatience for Finley to find her. When he was already two minutes late she was, like Cleopatra, ready to murder anyone who might be the cause of it. Yet the pain was delicious.

Strangely enough, she had discounted Dorcas from the beginning. Dorcas was such an ugly duckling. And Finley had confessed that beauty was his weakness. After listening acutely for his footsteps she put her hands over her ears and was taken unaware when he entered without being announced. He was tall and engaging in ancient white flannels, a trifle outgrown; he had repented his brutality and now his eyes were gunning for her avidly. Olivia had never known him more attractive.

"Hector," she cried, and made him come to her, seeing that his whimsicality was restored, that he was once more the big, clumsy, appealing boy.

"Where are the trumpets?" he queried and bent over her impulsively. It smelled of violets among those pillows, and right in the centre of them was Olivia's bright mouth, not literally speaking, but making itself understood. Finley kissed her obediently, and felt agreeably guilty.

And soon he was sitting alongside in something called a Polly-with-a-Past chair, stroking her hands and saying:

"You didn't really mind about the old portrait, did you? I was a bit of a beast, but I was jolly well punished, so that for that!"

"I've been miserable," she sighed luxuriously, "miserable," and reaching out for the electric button summoned the maid.

Finley rose and stood decorously till the order was executed and he could slump once more in the chair, tilting a glass of nectar and ambrosia, and taking childish delight in the musical tinkle of the ice. The picture that Olivia made in her auroral draperies, the whole atmosphere of subtle seduction worked upon his senses.

"I was a beast," he repeated reminiscently, "but that's what comes of fighting the fight for one's art. Since then everything has been pretty bad. I missed you, Olivia. The children caught the mumps, you know—" Her brow contracted as though he had said something indelicate—"and Dorcas couldn't do everything. And then she's been upset too about my failure to paint your portrait."

"I don't wish to talk about Dorcas," put in Olivia petulantly, "nor of the children, nor even of you, Hector, for the present, but solely of myself."

She sat upright amid the pillows, her hands clasped about her knees. She assumed a husky, mysterious voice.

"A change has come over me, Hector, so that now I believe you may wish to do my portrait after all. I sent for you to tell you."

Finley believed her.

"Truly? Don't tell me you've gotten religion or adopted a child or gone in for the craft."

"No." She put her hand eloquently in his. "I've forgotten myself. You can see what a change it has wrought in me already, how it has consumed

me like a flame." He examined her face in some awe and nodded abstractedly.

"It's because I love someone," proclaimed Olivia triumphantly. "I love someone better than myself."

"No?" His mouth dropped open. He passed a comic hand through his hair. Then it occurred to him he was treating Olivia's crisis too facetiously and he buckled on gravity. He became sincere in his tenderness. "Good," he said heartily, "good. Then I'll paint you, by Heaven, with the look of giving and outpouring that every real woman ought to wear. It only comes through yielding to Nature, through suffering or joy."

Was he being intentionally *difficile?*

"Hector," she laughed through her tears, "it is *you* I love, stupid—*you* I love, silly. Now what are you going to do with me?"

It would be delicious when he opened his arms to her. Instead he opened his eyes, round eyes full of amazement, confusion, apology. He flushed violently and unbecomingly.

"You're jesting!"

"No!" She had gone too far to recover. He saw and was ashamed to see the urgency in her eyes. "You've made me love you; you can't cast me off. . . ."

"Great God!" he protested and sudden perspiration broke out on his forehead. "If this is true I can't paint you. Olivia, be sensible. I wouldn't presume to love you even if—even if—"

"But you kissed me," she remembered numbly, and he came back with the childish logic:

"I thought you wanted to be kissed."

"And you said that beauty was your weakness. That if I had a soul—"

"Yes, I did say that, but it had no personal application."

He got to his feet with a gesture that seemed begging her to spare them both the indecency of such an argument. In wild abandonment Olivia came after him.

"I love you," she insisted, "more than anything in the whole wide world, and I'm—I'm beautiful. You can't deny it."

He stared at her like a bull at bay.

"Of course," he cried savagely, "I can't admit that any woman is more beautiful than my wife."

The bombshell!

"Dorcas?" came from Olivia incredulously. "Dorcas?" and she nearly died of mirth. "That poor little wasted wisp of humanity, that rattling skeleton with no features or colouring or charm?" Then she grew afraid of him and censored her tone, "Perhaps she was beautiful once, Hector, and you don't realize how she's changed. You can't realize what marriage and having all those children has done to her."

He moved his head about in his collar as though seeking greater latitude in which to talk.

"I ought to know. I've been studying this one thing all my life. It's my portraits of Dorcas that have brought me reputation. A layman wouldn't understand. She's the pure Renaissance type of beauty, the line of the chin flowing into the throat. She has the meek loveliness of a Botticelli Madonna; her hands—" He broke off sensitively.

"One question," choked Olivia. "Is that why you love her?"

"I'll tell you why I love her—because she's true to nature. She's been down into the arena to fight; she's loved gallantly and accepted the consequences of love. Don't you know—" he lowered his voice, "that the old masters loved to glorify the natural? They loved to paint pregnant women, for example. In our own day there's Rodin, with his tremendous feeling for unadorned nature, even the grotesque and ugly." He paused, then, gently, confidingly, still hoping that she would not let herself be hurt, "I've always wanted to put a rope of pearls around my wife's neck. And if I had painted your portrait for the price we agreed upon that was what I should have bought with the proceeds."

Olivia, robbed as she was of any pose, had turned her back. She was tasting the first real sorrow of her life, obtaining to a sense of values. For if Dorcas was beautiful what was she? But Olivia could be gallant too.

"She has your love," she murmured brokenly. "She doesn't need—pearls."

THE TERRIBLE MEEK

By James Shannon

HE stropped his razor slowly, paying careful attention to the angle of the blade against the leather and testing the gleaming steel with a cautious forefinger.

He was aware of a feeling of adamantine strength, which he attributed to the conscious dignity and poise he had displayed in the whole lamentable affair. With this he was conscious of a certain feeling of brutality, of having taken advantage of his masculine strength of character in an unequal contest against a weaker opponent.

And yet he had adopted the only possible attitude. To have acted otherwise would have been a complete surrender of his individuality. It would have destroyed precisely those qualities which she most admired—which had attracted her to him in the beginning.

He laid the strop aside and dabbed on a fresh layer of the warm lather. He remembered afterwards that his face in the mirror had aged slightly, had lost something of its buoyant and irresponsible youth.

Removing a bit of the soap, he clipped off the line at the ear, and then, holding the razor firmly, he began shaving his left cheek.

He held that there was a point beyond which a girl should not go. Liberty of action was the first principle between a man and a woman. While not deprecating the uses of chivalry, he felt that any other rule simply led to that blind slavery of one party which was the Victorian ideal of the sex relation.

Ever since they had known each other, they had agreed upon that principle—absolute freedom of thought and action. Let the Philistine hunger after a sentimental union of mind, soul and body; intelligent persons sought to retain the flavour of their separate personalities.

From the beginning of their engagement they had fought for this ideal. Then she had reverted suddenly that afternoon, with a feeble, feminine perversity, to the contention that all of a man's actions—especially those of a man in love—should be governed by a woman's wishes. She knew that he detested dances, considered them arid deserts of vapidity, loathed them with all the intensity of his formality-hating soul. But this had not deterred her from demanding that he take her to the fortnightly dance of the Bandoliers at the Country Club. And when he had protested gently, whimsically, she had shown that she was hurt and aggrieved at his refusal.

He was shaving carefully, and had reached the delicate point at the left corner of the mouth. His lips, he could not help but notice, were compressed slightly. His well-formed chin, gleaming smoothly where the razor had just left it, jutted out almost prognathously.

He felt like a brute; he almost felt that he looked like a brute. Still he had taken the only possible course. It was better that they should come to an understanding now, before it was too late.

He was surprised at her change of attitude. In the early period of their engagement, when they were busy discovering elusive, delightful qualities in

each other, she had agreed that nothing —absolutely nothing—should interfere with the liberty of the individual.

She had listened to him with adorable gravity as he propounded his theory of the Ideal Marriage. He could see her now, her blue eyes gazing at him softly, her red lips parted slightly, as he spun his web of theory and ideals.

He remembered how enthusiastically she had agreed with every principle that he enunciated.

"Nothing shall ever come before us for decision where the individual will not exercise unhampered free will," she had declared.

He cut himself viciously on the chin. A thin pencil of red welled from the cut. He swore softly and applied the styptic.

Well, it was over with, and she knew where he stood. If he had spoken brutally, it was for her own good. She would realize that later. And it was necessary that she should know that his ideas were not mere transient vagaries, but were built on a rock foundation of Reason and Logic.

She could cry, as she had cried that afternoon, more from vexation than soul's pain. He would remain firm. They had never quarrelled before; she had deferred to his sound masculine judgment. Perhaps he had been over-ironic in his remarks; he had been hurt and disappointed by her attitude.

He was finished shaving now, and was going over his face a second time with meticulous care, when he was startled to hear a low rap at the door.

He stopped breathlessly and blinked several times when a soft voice, with a suggestion of a tear in it, asked timidly:

"May I come in, Charley?"

He drew back the door, and saw her, cool and lovely in a Japanese kimono, standing on the threshold and carrying a mass of white linen over her left arm. She gazed directly at him, so that he could see the wistful appeal in her blue eyes, not yet clear of the tear-mist.

Then she extended the gleaming piece of linen towards him.

"Here's your dress shirt, Charles," he heard his wife say: "I've put in all the buttons, and it won't take you a minute to get into it. The dance is at nine, you know."

THE only thing that fools and philosophers have in common is that they occasionally collide with each other in running after the same woman.

WOMEN show an independent spirit when they are sure of lots of admirers or none at all.

IN PLEASANT PLACES

By Philip Owen

I

AS Tom Carrington walked up the little concrete path that led to the Merritons' house, he made little figures in the snow with his cane, after the manner of a young man who was feeling very well satisfied with the world, and who needed physical expression for that feeling.

Well, why shouldn't he feel pretty good? Inside, Alice was waiting for him, with a diamond on the third finger of her left hand that told all the world . . As he pressed the bell, he caught his reflection in the glass of the door, and straightened his tie. He heard footsteps in the hall within, and gave his collar a last twist to the left. The door opened, and Alice stood there, smiling up at him.

"I thought it must be you," she said. "Come in quick, it's cold."

She stood aside to let him pass, and he walked in through the hall to the little library on the left. Alice followed him in, and coming up to him, where he stood with his back to the fire, she cuddled her cheek against his sleeve.

"Nice to see you even for two minutes," she said softly.

By George, this was a pleasant room; the fire here, and the way it reflected on those mahogany chairs, and the bookcases around the sides of the room—everything so comfortable! It would be nice to live among these things some day.

"When you called up," Alice was saying, "you didn't say when you were going West."

She had moved a step or two away from him, and was standing with her hands stretched out to the warmth of the fire. What sensible hands she had, so firm and strong and capable! He looked at her for a moment or two before answering, she made such a wholesome picture standing there—her eyes cast down, her hair drawn smoothly over each brow, her simple dress.

"I've got to go to-night," he said at length. "I don't know, but I think this is a big chance for me. The boss almost said as much. So when I get back, we ought to be able to get married. It's funny. You know, the boss said just the other day that he'd rather have married men working for him."

"You know I'm always ready, Tom," said Alice, coming closer to him, and putting her hands on his arm. They stood there talking for a few moments until Carrington reached for his watch.

"Well," he said, looking down at the watch, "I'm afraid I'll have to break away. I'm sorry, but I've got to pack up a few of my duds and dash around and see the boss for a few seconds." His left hand came over and gripped both of hers firmly a second. "It won't be very long before I'm back again, Alice."

He turned away from the fire and walked out into the hall; after giving his hat a little tilt to the left, he kissed her lightly, and was out the door and down the walk. At the end of the walk he stopped to wave his hand at her as she stood in the doorway.

Packing his things that night, he stopped as the thought of the soft light of the Merritons' library and the gleam

of the fire on old-fashioned furniture came back to him. As he sat on the edge of his bed and folded his pyjamas into a compact bundle, he recalled his first visit to the Merriton house. Nearly twelve years ago that had been. Why, he was nothing but a kid then—fifteen—and had been carrying special delivery letters for the post office. And one of them had taken him up to Merritons'.

Old Judge Merriton had been alive and had come to the door when he rang, peering out over his glasses into the uncertain light. Then when he had pointed out with his finger where the judge was to sign for the letter, the old man had stood pulling at his moustache and squinting at the handwriting on the envelope for a full two minutes, for all the world like a woman with a letter. But those two minutes had given him a chance to look down the hall and through the half-opened door of the dining-room at the end.

Funny how well he remembered that night. Why, it had been almost like a play for him. He had heard Mrs. Merriton's voice, a subdued, far-off murmur, and then a sudden burst of laughter at the end of her words. From the doorstep he had been able to see only the judge's place at the table, with the stiffly crumpled napkin at the left of his plate, the big roast in front, the gleaming silver and the white tablecloth, and there at the right hand some red stuff in a peculiar shaped glass. Then, before the judge had had a chance to shut the door, Alice had got up from her place and had gone around the table and out of sight. That little swish of curls across his vision had been sort of—what would you call it?—well, it had sort of made him want those things. Funny how a man remembered those little incidents.

He stuffed the pyjamas into his bag, and reached in his pocket for a cigarette. As he drew in the first mouthful of smoke he crushed a few stray grains of tobacco between his teeth; the dull, sweet taste that followed was pleasant. Pleasant—like that night. He remembered going down the walk that night and saying to himself that some day he would go back there and ring the bell and be asked in by the judge. As company, you know. By going straight and steady, even a poor kid got somewhere. And, at that, he hadn't done so badly. Most fellows, now . . .

Good Lord, look at that clock! He'd have to get a move on. He ground out the butt of his cigarette, and snapped his bag shut. Just time to trot around and see the boss, and then off for the West and big stuff!

II

It was from Chicago that he wrote first, telling Alice that he expected to stay there ten days or a fortnight; at the end of his letter he added a few words of what he termed, half sheepishly "soft stuff."

Chicago was, however, only his base of operations; he had to cover the territory near Chicago by closely calculated train connections from one small town to another. So that the telegram which came for him at the Harrison House in Chicago stayed for several days in one of the pigeonholes behind the hotel desk, and when Carrington came back, after five days out of the city, the clerk handed it to him with apologies for the delay in delivery. There hadn't been a forwarding address, and they weren't quite sure. . . . Carrington listened with a smile to these excuses, and said a few words that would put the clerk at his ease.

Up in his room he tossed the telegram on the table, and sat down to glance through the evening paper that he had brought with him. This was probably from the boss with some last-minute instructions. There certainly wasn't a bit of news in the papers these days. He flung the paper aside, and looked again at the telegram lying on the table. The boss must think he amounted to something, sending telegrams this way instead of writing. He walked over and picked up the envelope, ripped it open and spread the

yellow sheet of paper on the smooth surface of the table. It said:

Alice very ill; come as soon as possible.

Harriet Merriton.

His hands passed mechanically over the piece of paper, smoothing out the folds. Alice ill? Come as soon as possible? But it wasn't . . . as a matter of fact, it was damned inconvenient to leave just now. Why should Alice's mother write that way? Probably just an old woman's nerves. And just at this time, too. Why, she knew very well he was busy trying to make good. To go way back home and find that Alice had a bad cold or something of that sort! Good Lord!

He sank down in the chair and let his whole body relax. Of course, she might really be ill. Only women were so apt to give false alarms. Well, he'd go. Oh, sure, he'd go now, even if it was a wild-goose chase. But he bet the boss would be sore. This was the darnedest mess! As he mused he watched the minute hand of the cheap little clock on his mantel creep around on its almost imperceptible journey. This had to be settled right off. He crumpled the telegram into a ball, and reached for the telephone. After a few thickened buzzes, he was asking the night clerk for the time of trains going east. . . .

There was one at eleven-fifty. Yes, he'd be glad to call up. . . . What was that? Oh, a lower—if possible. Yes. This was Mister Carrington speaking, wasn't it? Oh, yes, he'd call him right back and let him know. . . . And, just in case there weren't any berths, there was a good train at eight-fifteen in the morning. . . . The metallic voice on the other end of the wire stopped, and Carrington turned from the telephone to gather some of his articles lying on the dresser. In less than two minutes the telephone rang again.

Mr. Carrington? It was too bad about that train, but there weren't—No, no berths at all. Oh, yes, they had coaches, but— What was that? Yes, it *was* pretty apt to be crowded at this time of the year. . . . Why, yes, he'd say that a man would have some trouble in finding a seat. Yes, that was right. Eight-fifteen in the morning. . . . About every hour. Oh, it was no trouble at all. . . .

Carrington put the receiver back on the hook. Hours on the day coach, with only a chance for cat-naps that would leave him all tired out! Or if there were no seats in the day-coach, then a ride in the more exhausting smoker. The smoker—where your seat-mate smoked cheap cigars and leaned over and put his fat, moist hand on your knee every minute or two and spit out into the aisle. And after the smoking stopped, at two or three in the morning, the chorus of animal-like breathing was even worse. . . .

Probably Alice's mother was scared to death over nothing. Women got that way sometimes, when— He could run out to Glendale to-morrow early and see the Mayfair people and land that order, and still get home by that morning train. Then the boss wouldn't have so much kick coming. That Mayfair order would be a big one. . . .

He unpacked a few toilet articles, and began to undress slowly. This was much more sensible. Alice hadn't meant for him to come just the instant he got the telegram; she meant just as soon as he could, of course. He laid his clothes carefully on the chair beside his bed, and, opening the window, took several deep breaths of the fresh air. That made him sleep better. There was only a few hours' difference between the two trains, anyway, and it meant a good night's sleep for him, and a lot of business. If the thing had been urgent, they would have said so, surely. He climbed into bed and pushed the button near the head of his bed.

As he lay in the dark, with the languor of healthy fatigue creeping over him, he had a peculiar sensation of being suspended between waking and sleeping. It occurred to him vaguely that he had been very wise to stay over.

He stretched his feet out to the end of the bed, and relaxed completely; as he sank deeper and deeper into unconsciousness an old phrase out of a Sunday-school lesson of the past came back to him and ran through his head in mad fashion: "My lines . . . have fallen . . . in pleasant places . . . my lines . . . have . . . fallen . . . in . . . pleasant . . ."

III

At five minutes after ten the next morning he was rolling out of the station at Glendale, eastward bound, and was settling himself in his chair for the nine hours' ride that lay before him. A magazine lay unopened on his knee: full of silly love stories, he supposed. These trips were very tiresome, and none of the people on his car looked interesting: a lot of women and a few old men. Sometimes you struck a live wire in the smoking-room, and heard some good dope on business. . . .

He turned to the magazine for a few minutes. As often as the tall shaft of a factory chimney came in sight he swung his chair around to the window and watched it closely as the train whirled him by. It was fascinating to look in through those grimy windows, in past whirling belts and wheels, the machines going in a devilish clatter, movement and ferment, and in the midst of it all, workmen going about unconcernedly, or bending over some machine. Behind all that seeming confusion there was some directing brain, some quiet man in a small office, who pressed buzzers and dictated letters and gave orders. Captains of industry! That was the stuff! You used the old bean and ran one of those plants, and got a nice home and nice things. . . . Those factory towns were interesting, too. Well, it was time for lunch already. . . .

Now, in the afternoon, was the time when it really began to get tiresome on the train. It was beginning to get dark outside. The lights in the factories now winking like stars as the train rolled on. "First call for dinner —dinin' car in the rear!" Well, it was too early now; he'd wait a little while, and then when he'd finished he'd be nearly home. . . . It wasn't so bad, eating in the diner; he'd always wondered what the people at the different stations thought of the diner when it rolled by. It looked so cosy from the outside, and it felt so comfortable there, with the slight swaying motion and the polite darkies and the good food. "A demi-tasse!" Ah, he felt better. Now for a smoke and in a few minutes they ought to be in, if the train was on time.

Ah, there were the lights now. "Just this bag, George." There was Donegan's oyster-bar, too. "Ogden! Ogden!"

IV

Carrington felt confused. The library seemed so changed, somehow. It was so quiet. Just the same furniture and everything, and yet— There was a great deal of quiet stir in the house, people doing this and that, but doing it so quietly. As still as—why had he had to think of that comparison? There was Miss Evans now; she had been the one who took care of Alice. She looked very capable, making so little noise when she walked, closing doors behind her so quietly. Funny the way her hair came out from under her nurse's cap—sort of fluffy like. So damned quiet here! It got on a person's nerves. Just those faint sounds of someone moving around upstairs, someone taking pains not to make any noise. What were they so scared of making a noise for, anyway? It couldn't do any harm —now. . . .

There was Miss Evans again. Those dresses they had to wear were kind of neat-looking, at that. How much a nurse had to look after—even when—even afterward. . . . Now, what possible difference could it have made if he had taken the earlier train? The train might easily have been an hour late, or something might have happened. Why hadn't Mrs. Merriton worded that message differently. He

had thought she meant . . . well, as a matter of fact, he had come as soon as possible. Who could have foreseen that there wouldn't be any berths on that late train? Miss Evans again; he'd better speak to her; it would be the decent thing to do.

"Oh, Miss Evans," he said suddenly, "have you—have you got a minute?"

"Yes." The girl stopped and waited for him to speak. She was a nice-looking little thing. Had good-looking eyes. And quite a lot of colour, too.

"Why, I wanted to thank you for what you did for Alice—for Miss Merriton. Mrs. Merriton said you had been very kind."

"Why, I'm sure, I only— Oh, it's so dreadful. She was so young."

"Yes, it was terrible. I'm all broken up. You know we were—were—"

"I know. She used to talk about you a great deal." There was a momentary pause. She was so quiet, and yet somehow she gave you the impression of a girl with a lot to her.

"I've never happened to see you around Ogden before," he resumed.

"Oh, no; I just came over here a little while ago. I finished training at St. Luke's, and came here only a couple of months ago."

"You're here for keeps, then?"

"I guess so."

"Where do you—I suppose you stay here in town now?"

"Yes, I live at the Nurses' Home. A lot of us stay there."

"I see . . . I'm in no shape to tell you how grateful I am to you, Miss Evans, but I'll look you up some time soon, when I'm—that is—"

"Surely."

"Oh, Miss Evans." It was Mrs. Merriton, calling from the hall.

As the girl left the room Carrington reached in his pocket for a little leather-covered address-book that he carried there. He opened the book and on one of the pages he wrote carefully, "Miss Evans, Nurses' Home, Winter Street."

A WILD DAY

By Oscar Williams

SHADOWS that blow through the grasses
As the shadows that move in the sea;
Clouds, through a wild, blue, beautiful sky,
Rolling silently;—

A tree like a glory in the sunlight,
With leaves that glimmer and glance;
And far away the poised grey mountains
Like billows caught in a trance;

And a wind that roars and washes
Like a wild flood rushing by;
And in my heart a singing,
And words that cry.

CATERPILLAR AND BUTTERFLY

By Paul Eldridge

WHEN he was a caterpillar, he considered himself brother to the worm and the ant. He loved the solid earth, and the hard bark of trees. He hated passionately all winged beings—butterflies, and bees, and birds—all those that loved the dainty air more than the homely earth. He despised buzzing and humming and singing. He loved silence. In silence all great things were accomplished—feeding, battling, hoarding. Stalks and trunks were faithful and honest; leaves and petals were fickle and treacherous. In time, he was quite certain, the flying things — butterflies, and bees, and birds — would be exterminated, while worms and ants and caterpillars would continue to multiply until the earth would bend beneath their weight.

When he became a butterfly, he considered himself brother to the bee, and the sparrow, and the eagle. He loved the air that rocked like a sea, and had waves and tides. The black earth he did not deign to look upon. He alighted upon the perilous tips of petals and leaves. He loved the buzzing of bees, the music of birds, the gentle clatter of his own wings. All that crawled—ants, and caterpillars, and worms—the vermin of the world, he despised. He loved things that lived intensely, and died over night—perfume, and honey, and colour. He hated things that lived forever—bark of trees, and stalks and thorns. He was certain that before the end of Summer the vermin of the world would be crushed by hoofs or eaten by the beaks of birds; and that upon the endless Sea of Air that rocked and had waves and tides the winged things of the earth would sail in mighty hordes.

VANITY in a woman is not objectionable when it consists in her showing that she knows she is pretty. The vanity that is objectionable consists in her showing that she presumes other women know she is pretty.

FAILURES—those who carry on that others may carry off.

PAULA

By Oscar Lewis

I

I AM not one who would say that environment counts for anything. I dislike the idea in the abstract, and I suspect it when it is applied to individual cases. "Of course, when one considers how she was brought up—" Who has heard that phrase without a feeling of instinctive distrust? In nine cases out of ten environment, I would say, counts for precisely nothing. I am thoroughly convinced of the truth of this, as everyone must be who has given the subject even casual thought. And yet—by what other means is one to explain Paula Elston?

Is she, perhaps, the doubtful tenth—or hundredth—person to whom environment is everything; who is shaped and moulded and fed by her surroundings? Is she a mere hollow receptacle, empty of all save that which has been poured in from the outside; a sort of heroic perversion of the principle which in happier times was applied to the non-refillable bottle?

The subject becomes an increasingly gloomy one, and unnecessarily so, since this concerns Paula Elston. For Paula has inspired many people to a great variety of emotions, but never, I am convinced, to gloom. She has driven some to despair, no doubt, but always to despair of a stimulating sort; to an almost hilarious hopelessness. Those who have a liking for facile explanations might call this the secret of her success.

For Paula Elston is the most successful woman in Barwick. Her enemies—she has the right number of enemies, and the right sort; they consolidate her position, give it its final strength—frankly admit her success. She is thirty-four years old, and I have known her since she was nine.

Her family moved to Rincon in 1896. They came from a town in the Upper Sacramento Valley, where the father had conducted a prosperous business in wheat. The Elstons built a house out near the end of Rincon's main residential street and began life in rather a grand style. Paula was the only child. I remember her first as a sedate little imp with yellow curls, seated in the carriage beside her father, who drove to the post-office nearly every afternoon for his newspaper and mail. Mr. Elston was a man of no more than forty, but aloof in bearing and very dignified. He was never popular in Rincon; indeed, by most people he was actively disliked and when, nine years later, the crash came, there were few who expressed sympathy for him for having got himself ruined and disgraced.

But during his first years in Rincon he undoubtedly was one of the big men of the town. He built the Elston Block, a three-story structure, the lower floor of which was occupied by his own wheat-brokerage business. He was one of the organizers of the new water system, and during his third year in Rincon he became a director of the Kampf Bank. His first name was Gerald, and that for some reason added to his unpopularity; perhaps because he refused to conceal it behind an initial, as was customary among our business men of standing. He was Gerald Elston, not G. W. or G. P. or plain G. Elston. There seemed to be something indecent about the reckless ex-

posure of such a name; even, in some remote way, it was obscene. Moreover, he travelled frequently to San Francisco. Scarcely a week passed but that his carriage could be seen drawn up of an afternoon before the station, waiting for the five o'clock train, on which Gerald Elston would be returning from the city.

It is doubtful if Paula at that time was old enough to feel any of the results of her father's unpopularity. She did not go to the public schools of the town—another indictment against Gerald Elston—and as a consequence she saw nothing of children of her own age and so escaped their frank crudities. She was, I believe, a model of the childish virtues. She would sit in the Elston carriage before her father's office for an hour at a time with no sign of impatience, her hands crossed decorously in the lap of her starched dress, only casually interested in the happenings of the street, and very careful of her yellow curls. Like most children whose only models have been adults, she had, in the presence of other children, the bearing of a duchess among a group of incredibly awkward young stevedores and servant girls. It was with secret fury that the mothers of the town on May 5th of each year accompanied their own gangling children to Paula's birthday parties; never did they appear so hopeless, so perversely incapable of improvement as on those days!

One can imagine the delight of these suffering parents when it became known that the model Paula was a sham, her heart filled with the basest sort of deceit and corruption. The news leaked out one day through that immemorial outlet of family scandal, the kitchen door. The crime had something to do with periodic depredations upon a dish of bonbons which Mrs. Elston habitually kept upon a shelf on a dresser in her bedroom. Suspicion had turned naturally to Paula, who, with an appearance of innocence that covered unsuspected depths of guile, cleared herself and implicated Mary Midge, known in the Elston household as the upstairs girl. Mary Midge, a devotee in her leisure hours to Nicholas Carter, thereupon prepared a trap, in the form of a chair placed conveniently near the dresser. Upon this she placed a thin coating of ashes, and when, several hours later, an examination revealed small footprints, the downfall of Paula was accomplished.

It was several years after this explosion of her spurious reputation for perfection that Paula again achieved a moment of fame in Rincon. She was then a girl of thirteen or fourteen, thin and quiet, and more graceful than is usual in girls of her age. In Rincon she was known as not strong. In consequence of this lack of strength, her attendance at the convent school was limited to the morning sessions. Her afternoons at home were intended to be periods of recuperation.

It was with some surprise, therefore, that Paula's father, driving one afternoon to the station upon one of his trips to San Francisco, discerned a familiar red-lined cape before the window of the box-office of the Lyceum Theatre. A repertoire company, called the New York Players, that week was offering a variety of popular favourites. On that Thursday matinee "The Curse of Man"—billed as greater than "Ten Nights in a Barroom"—was playing. Now Paula, that afternoon, according to her own word, was at home resting in her room. She had declared this intention across the luncheon-table hardly an hour before Gerald Elston, passing the theatre, had caught the red flare of her cape.

I can picture Paula making that announcement; the transparent frankness of her eyes as she gazed across the table at her father, then slipped from her chair, kissed her parents dutifully, and followed, no doubt, by their eyes, walked through to the hall and ascended the stairs, one hand upon the polished rail. Nothing, I am sure, could have been more guileless than her manner as she had made that exit. The childlike purity of her face did not merely invite

belief; to have doubted her would have been to doubt the essential innocence of childhood itself. I can picture her expression thus clearly because I chanced to see Gerald Elston lead her from the theatre to his carriage on the curb, and she wore then precisely that manner; the perfect figure of one who is triumphant in adversity.

I pause here, struck by the futility of attempting to put down reminiscences of so contemporary a figure as Paula Elston. She is, as I have said, thirty-four years old, and she has been married six years. Perhaps I should refer to her by her post-nuptial name, which is Hardison. But the success which has come to her as Mrs. Hardison is the result merely of the curious fund of knowledge acquired, of, I may say, technique developed while she was Paula Elston.

One marvels at the deliberate, sure rate of her progress toward success. Almost, one can imagine her as a little girl pondering some addition to her store of knowledge and expressing her thoughts in such words as these: "This looks promising. Worthy of investigation, at any rate. Yes, I'll give it a trial. Who knows? I may have use for it when I have become a successful wife." It would certainly be of interest to know the actual substance of her early reveries, for one might learn then how much of her preparation was with the object plainly in view; how much was carried forward under the less definite promptings of mere instinct.

II

Although I had known Paula Elston almost from the first hour of her arrival at Rincon, it was not until the failure of her father's grain-brokerage business that I began to gain an understanding of what I may term the technique—the semi-conscious technique—of her campaign. She had no faculty that enabled her inevitably to choose the right course; no happy instinct for success. She had, in fact, to feel her way forward, progressing patiently over a path of blunders and experiments. But she was not one to make a mistake a second time. If a mistake was repeated it was done with the scrupulous care of a scientist who wishes to confirm the apparent result of a previous test. When there was no doubt, and the thing was proved a failure, she wiped it with a single gesture from the slate.

The Elston failure descended upon Rincon with a mighty shock. Three men were brought one morning from San Francisco to go over the books of the company, and throughout that day crowds gathered before the Elston Block and looked in through the plate-glass windows of the office. Rumours of a fifty-thousand, of a two-hundred-thousand-dollar shortage circled the town in swift succession. Two years before, Gerald Elston had converted his brokerage business—still very prosperous—into a stock company and a score of townspeople had invested in it, Gerald Elston remaining as president. He remained, indeed, until the arrival of the three certified accountants, whom he greeted urbanely and saw well to work. He disappeared then completely until the following night, when, his beard shaven, he stepped from a train at Yuma, Arizona, from which point he had hoped to cross into Mexico.

I talked with Paula Elston during the midst of the turmoil which followed this affair. She had been away to school and had come back now apparently only because her mother had insisted upon it. We walked the tree-sheltered length of Jefferson Street, and I heard of the wreck of the family fortunes as it appeared to Paula.

"It seems certain that we are wiped out," she said. "Nothing was in mother's name, not even the house or the balance in the bank. And, of course, I haven't a thing, not enough jewellery to make it worth while selling. Everything will go to the creditors. Can you imagine that? We will not have enough even to leave this town; we'll have to stay here. My schooldays, of course—"

She ended with a gesture that indicated the airy nature of her future schooldays.

She was eighteen. She walked with a stride at once active and graceful, some of the disdain she had worn in the carriage as a child still evident in the poise of her head, the free swing of her arms. A girl, even then, of real distinction. We reached the Elston house, the square, lumpy structure which gave the effect of having had its skin drawn too tightly about it, and I passed Paula's purchases to her across the gate. We had met as she had emerged from a store downtown. She extended her gloved hand; I was going back to the city that same afternoon.

"I wonder," she said, "if you realize your fortune in escaping this place? I had planned to leave, too; since I can remember I have been planning it. Father always listened to me; we might have moved in another year or two. If only he had deeded mother the house! Nothing could have touched it then. We could have sold it and moved down to the bay—"

I walked back down Jefferson Street. I had known Paula Elston since she was nine, and her attitude now did not puzzle me. I have said that she had no happy instinct for success. Her superb adaptability, her power to profit by a mistake once made; from this alone she drew her remarkable poise and surety. It was only when confronted by something new, something unprepared for, that she acted upon pure instinct. And pure instinct with her was invariably wrong. In regard to her father's failure, I was sure that when next I saw her that instinctive attitude of frank selfishness would have responded to Paula's sense of observation and fallen into more conventional lines.

I was not mistaken. It would have been difficult to recognize in her the frankly bitter and wholly selfish person I had left on Jefferson Street a month before. Paula met me at the doorway of the bulging house and we went to what in those days was her favourite haunt, a deep alcove window that faced the east, commanding a view of the river and a succession of foothills that sloped off to the valley floor. The town was invisible; from that one point no houses could be seen.

Paula leaned back in her chair and for a time searched this prospect with interest. Her attitude was one that might be adopted by a convalescent or a semi-invalid; her face turned toward the window, her fine profile between me and the outer light.

To my surprise she talked of immaterial things, passing leisurely from trifle to trifle while I listened with growing irritation. Gerald Elston's trial had been in progress during my absence; evidences of his unscrupulousness had piled up against him from a dozen sources. Paula, I knew, had spent an entire afternoon upon the witness-stand in the packed and dingy courtroom downtown. I remembered how, on Jefferson Street, she had poured out her thoughts, for the mere satisfaction, apparently, of putting them into words, and her attitude now seemed the height of wilful perversity. The incredible girl actually began what promised to be an exhaustive account of a vacation trip, two years old, to Hawaii; an absolutely puerile account of deck games and the arrangement of staterooms, and who had been seasick.

"I don't believe you are interested," she said, observing my discomfort at last.

I fought down a grin.

"I am interested much more in your plans for your next vacation," I said.

She resumed her interested study of the foothills beyond the river. "I have no plans for the future," she said.

Her tone was intended as a gentle rebuke, but I was not yet ready to forget the outrageous half hour I had passed through.

"The last time I saw you," I reminded her, "you had no lack of plans."

Paula turned and looked full into my face. I am sure that my reference to her vehemence that day was the last

thing she had expected to hear. Possibly she herself had nearly forgotten that her present attitude in regard to her father was not her original one. I have said that Paula's mistakes were never repeated; that having been proved mistakes, they were blotted from the slate. She was disconcerted now at my having caused the reappearance of a discarded figure, confronting her with an attitude that was dead and in her mind already unreal and nebulous.

III

I saw now how impossible was any expectation that Paula would discuss her plans with the frankness she had used upon our previous meeting. She had now, in fact, no plans. Her views were thoroughly idiotic and conventional. She refused to look beyond the trial. The trial itself she referred to, I remember, as "terrible." She gave the impression of having been overwhelmed, of not knowing where to turn; the conventional figure of innocence crushed to earth.

This attitude, I found presently, had been accepted throughout the town. Paula Elston was clearly the romantic figure of the trial. Everyone seemed to have made the discovery that Paula —frequently it was "poor" Paula—was free from blame; that she who had done nothing was being made to suffer along with the guilty. She must have made an unforgettable picture on the witness-stand; her distinguished bearing, a look of aloof suffering upon her beautiful, pale face. It had been impossible not to be impressed. The effect of it all, curiously, had been to foster increased bitterness toward Gerald Elston, who obviously deserved no such daughter, and had proved himself doubly a scamp by causing her this unpleasantness. The attorneys for the defence, observing this unexpected result, had banished Paula from the courtroom during the remainder of the trial.

Whatever was accomplished by the downfall of Gerald Elston, this much is certain: that Paula emerged from it in triumph. That she herself realized her enormous gain in prestige there can be no doubt. One afternoon during the week that followed the close of the trial I talked with her for a moment when we met upon the street downtown. I was returning to the city and was on my way to the station.

"You know," she said, referring to this, "that I had intended leaving Rincon. I told you that before."

I nodded encouragingly. For her to leave was, I felt, the best plan.

"But, of course," she hurried on, "that's out of the question now."

I could not tell if she was thinking of the financial difficulties of such a change, for she and her mother had, in fact, been left almost penniless, or if she had in mind some conventional foolishness about facing it out. In my doubt I could do no more than murmur politely that to stay perhaps would be as good a plan as any.

"Because," I added, to take some of the seeming disinterest from my reply, "all this—excitement will be forgotten very soon."

The words were no sooner said than I was conscious that I had gained her closest attention. She regarded me for a moment with the sort of suspended expression one adopts while mentally weighing a new and surprising impression. She smiled then and said lightly, "Of course! These nine-day wonders! They blow over, don't they?"

The truth was clear at once that Paula had not considered the obvious fact that her present very comforting prestige was not going to last. After we had parted I caught sight of her slim, active figure progressing through the crowd toward Jefferson Street, and I found myself wondering what life ultimately holds for the Paula Elstons of the earth.

So it came about that Paula, after all, left Rincon. Despite my prediction, the town's interest in her did not at once die after the trial itself had become a memory. Paula still retained her position, a sort of appealing and

passive heroine, when after seven months she and her mother left Rincon for Barwick.

IV

The Barwick idea was Paula's own, but she, after all, was merely following what had become an established custom. A dozen years ago Barwick suddenly began to experience an influx of a curious character; became the Mecca of a strange cult.

I doubt if another town in the country has known anything of precisely the same nature. Suddenly, and without apparent reason, it became the custom for the women of ruined households to come to Barwick and open student boarding-houses. How so senseless a custom started no one knows, but its hold was like iron. From all over the state the wives of defaulters and families of embezzlers and corrupt county officials came and opened boarding-houses at Barwick, until presently the college town was dotted with such establishments. "She will go to Barwick, of course," this came to be the accepted formula in the interior towns, voiced to the accompaniment of the slamming of prison doors.

Paula and her mother arrived at the time this influx was at its height. They had been established two years in the gloomy clapboard house south of the campus when I made my first acquaintance with Paula in her new surroundings.

I had been dubious of this enterprise from the first. The place was called the Brookside. It was, of course, beside no brook, one knew instinctively that it would not be beside a brook; a brook, indeed, would have been resented as an incongruity. There were twenty students completing dinner at two long tables in the dining-room. The place was inexpressively dreary. Paula was nowhere to be seen. Mrs. Elston, harassed and futile, watched over two waitresses who were carrying in dessert, pink mounds of gelatin, and depositing the dishes with quick gestures before the boarders, replying with facile familiarity to those who addressed them.

Later, when Paula returned and we sat together in the little room she called her office, we heard the boarders surge back into the sitting-room. A piano dinned against the wall not six feet from where we sat. The screen door at the front of the house slammed incessantly; the rattle of careless dish-washing came from the rear.

Paula leaned back in her chair, quite unchanged in the midst of all this. I think it was then that I first grew convinced that there was something which could properly be called remarkable about her; that she was more than merely unusual. She had poise and serenity. She was as untouched now, as confident and sure of herself as she had been as a little girl sitting in the carriage in front of the Elston Block. And I knew suddenly that she was a success.

It was obvious that the Brookside was no less than a tragedy; another example of the perverse failure of everything Paula touched when she was forced to depend for guidance upon pure instinct. The remarkable thing is that she had not long ago lost all confidence in herself. She had rented this house, sign and all, and had hung the notice: "Board by the Day and Week," below the gilt "Brookside," and had waited for the tables to fill. And when the tables had filled she had taken the notice in.

These two gestures completed her interest in regard to the Brookside's clientele. Having filled the tables, her concern was to feed the boarders, to collect the weekly bills and pay the money out again to the servants and tradesmen. The house had filled naturally with the dregs and sweepings of the college community; with rabbit-faced freshmen who had not got their bearings, with depressing individuals who ate there because the house was near the library or simply because they had started to eat there and were physically too lazy to change, and with the

derelicts and drifters who had failed to gain entrance even into the better boarding-houses.

The Brookside continued in operation for four years after my visit to Paula that evening, and then, in 1913, the Brookside failed ingloriously. For three days the landlord vied with the butcher and the grocer in seizing what he could from the wreckage, and the dairyman, the baker and a half dozen others were vociferous because nothing was left for them. The startled freshmen, the grinds and the campus loafers drifted to other shabby boarding-houses, and Barwick, which a generation earlier had grown cynical through overlong contemplation of boarding-houses, displayed scarcely a ripple of interest.

Nearly six years Paula had spent at the Brookside in an atmosphere of three meals daily, of the tinny piano, of giggling, familiar waitresses and the sorry procession of students who filled her tables. And when I heard of the failure I pictured Paula in the midst of it, a heroic and undefeated figure, untouched and triumphant, and I knew that I was not wrong.

During the year that followed, and until she married, Paula worked as a salesgirl in a drygoods store on Centre Street. Here again she exhibited her incapacity to act in an emergency with anything approaching good judgment; the fatal imperfection that was visible in all her instinctive decisions. She had emerged from the ruin of the Brookside with her laurels about her; positively she had emerged a heroine. At a mere gesture a dozen positions might have been opened to her. And surely she might have married very well. I can recall no time since Paula ceased to wear her hair down her back that she might not have married very well. But on the day the Brookside was closed she had seen the sign in the window of the store on Centre Street, and she had taken the position and remained there a full year.

There is no reason why she should not now have appeared a pathetic figure of failure. In truth, she appeared nothing of the sort; she lived through that year with what can be described only as triumph. And then she married John Hardison, an underpaid instructor in one of the science departments, and went to live with him in a rented cottage. It seemed a final gesture, the capping of a life of preliminary failures with this last and permanent failure. John Hardison had no money, no ambition, no prospects; it was one of those foredoomed marriages.

V

Paula, as I have said, has been married six years, and, as I have said, she is acknowledged the most successful woman in Barwick. Last week I sat opposite her in the front room of the cottage and frankly studied her face. She gazed back at me with an unclouded countenance, a cool and serene gaze, and it came to me suddenly that her success was no mystery. Throughout a lifetime that had seemed a long repetition of the word failure she had been consistently triumphant. And presently the truth that was beneath this became clear to me: that Paula's success was something entirely independent of her surroundings, independent of events, of the rise and fall of the fortunes of those about her; yes, and of her own fortunes. I recalled the trial back at Rincon, I recalled her as she had sat that evening in the office of the Brookside, and I recalled the little girl I had seen hustled from the theatre years before.

And always I saw Paula triumphant, Paula successful—not in spite of adversity, not because of it—successful merely because she was Paula, and because Paula and success for some obscure reason are destined to go hand in hand through life.

POPULARITY

By William Drayham

THE great Oak, the incomparable Giant of the Forest, lay, struck by lightning, rotting in the roadway. A million ants and numberless worms were creeping and crawling upon him. They praised him, calling him noble and sturdy and generous. Birds, however, were rocking themselves and singing on the branches of other trees.

THE WHITE LILIES OF HOLINESS

By John McClure

SAINT ANDREW is a holy man.
His voice is like a knell;
"The white lilies of holiness
May not be plucked in hell."

Saint Thomas is a gray friar.
His words are without mirth:
"The white lilies of holiness
May not be plucked on earth."

And tenderly they show me
(For neither understands)
The white lilies of holiness
They pluck with quiet hands.

Saint Andrew is a holy man,
Saint Thomas a gray friar—
But the blown bubbles of the world
Are nearer my desire.

AT THE POOL OF BETHSEDA

By Howard Mumford Jones

I

LUCIUS RANFIELD, at thirty-three a Ph.D., and associate professor of history in Mitchell University, looked out of his office window on the ground floor of the library building, at the sunlight-flooded campus, checkered with the stationary shadows of the trees and the moving shadows of the clouds, and as he looked, he sighed.

On the ornamental stone bench confronting his window two boys and a girl were talking. One of the boys was Joseph Marsh. The girl he recognized as Margaret Adams; she had been a student in his history three class two years before. Looking at her unobserved, he said again how vital she was. He tried to say that she was the incarnation of splendid youth, but the word "vital" recurred as being better. He sighed again, and this time he ruefully shook his head.

The girl was laughing. Her hair, which was just darker than the sunlight which shimmered over it, surrounded her face like a halo of fine-spun flame. She was not handsome or even pretty; her features were irregular, and though he could not see them he knew that there was a light cloud of freckles on her nose and cheeks. He assumed that she considered them an affliction. But there was that in her thin, eager face, the dauntless poise of her head, and the lithe, free swing of her body, clad sensibly, as he noted with approval, in a blue skirt and a middy blouse, which was better than beauty. He knew she was a popular girl, and he had overheard one boy telling another with an implication of praise that there was no nonsense about Peggy Adams. Yes, she was vital.

The girl stood up. She laughed again, wholeheartedly. Some words were exchanged, a slight scuffle ensued, and suddenly the girl reached toward the elder boy, seized something he wore on his shirt, and with the swing of a wild, free creature ran across Ranfield's field of vision and disappeared. Her two companions stood, ridiculously awkward with surprise, and then with shouts gave chase. The one spectator was left with nothing to consider but the gold-green grass and the elm trees and the sun. He sighed a third time. It was fortunate that no one shared his office with him.

At thirty-three Lucius Ranfield felt that he was old. Or rather he concluded that he had put away childish things so long ago that by no chance whatsoever could he, now that in the fulness of riper wisdom he again desired them, reenter that Arcadia, the gates of which he had closed upon himself how long ago! Above all things in the world he loved youth. Youth with its brave ignorance, its delicate blooms, its fine and pathetic self-sufficiency—could he hope somehow to turn back the years of his life and live what he had totally missed? He did not think this, but it was true none the less that he saw in Margaret Adams the wistful and delicate flame of life he so longed to reillume within himself.

Looking backward, he felt with rueful comicality that as a boy he must have been preposterous. He had a vision of himself, gawky and solemn, determined even as a sophomore to master the history of the middle ages, and to that end sacrificing, with a supercilious gesture of refusal, the fruits he now longed to taste. It is probable that the picture

lacked greatly in truth, for he had had, and still retained, a great number of friends from his college days who would certainly have been repelled by the comic supplement version of young Lucius — how dreadfully young! — which Professor Ranfield musingly constructed. But the grossness of the exaggeration was the measure of his desire, at thirty-three, unmarried, learned, and brilliant, for the frivolities of the freshmen who gaped in wonder or in boredom through his class in history three.

Well, it was too late. He wondered how Shippey managed. Shippey, of the chemistry department, took co-eds to dances as though he were still an undergraduate. But then Shippey was only twenty-nine. Moreover, it seemed to him that a certain flexibility of conduct was by common consent permitted to persons in the sciences which was improper to men in the austerer arts. And moreover, though he scarcely admitted it to himself, Ranfield was timid, whereas Shippey was—well, not timid by a long shot. He did not like Shippey especially—he had too much *blague;* he despised Shippey; but because, of all things, he yearned to be young and frivolous, his dispraise of Shippey was only envy turned inside out.

His meditations were interrupted by the opening of his office door. Before he could recover his startled senses, it closed with a prodigious bang. He heard the sound of the key turning in the lock. He looked. Margaret Adams stood by the door, flushed and panting. Her black tie had worked around on her left shoulder, her tumbled hair was in imminent danger of cascading down her back, and one fist was in a most unladylike manner doubled up. At the same instant she turned.

"Oh!" she said expressively, and a tide of colour mounted to her cheeks. "I—I didn't mean to disturb you. I'll go."

The handle of the door rattled violently, and there was a thunder of knocks from the other side.

"Peg!" said a masculine voice. "Peggy Adams!"

With her hand on the door she paused.

"Don't go," he pleaded impulsively. "Won't they catch you?"

He blushed as he spoke, but he was tactful enough not to get up.

She turned and regarded him. The movement brought her hair down in a great wave of colour, and the hair pins tinkled to the floor.

"Oh!" she said, dismayed, and then, struck by the exquisite absurdity of the situation, they both laughed.

"If you wouldn't mind looking out of the window or reading a book or something—" she said, blushing furiously, and Ranfield, suddenly aware that he had been staring at her for an unconscionable time, swung sharply around in his swivel chair. The blows commenced again on the door.

She did up her hair swiftly and straightened her tie, and though he pretended to be reading an examination paper that lay on his desk, he was conscious that she was regarding him. He wondered whether he looked as uncomfortably silly as he felt.

"If those boys would only go away," she said at length, and turning, he saw that her hair was once more neatly piled on top of her head. "They—they want something I've got," she continued, embarrassed. The knocks sounded again.

"You mustn't let them have it," he said gravely. "You got away from them too cleverly for that."

She shot him an odd, swift glance.

"I saw you from the window," he explained.

For some reason this seemed to comfort her. "It's that dreadful Joe Marsh," she said. "He found my sorority pin—I lost it days ago—and he's been wearing it."

She exhibited the pin which she had put on the table. Suddenly she held it up. There was a minute fragment of cloth hanging from it.

"I tore his shirt!" she exclaimed in alarm.

Professor Ranfield laughed. "From what I know of Joe Marsh, I don't be-

lieve the ruin is irreparable. I *think* he wears a new one every three days."

"He has scads of money," she returned, "but he's an awful simp. Ooo! I'm talking to a faculty member, I mean —I mean—I don't like him very well," she concluded lamely.

She turned to examine the contents of his book shelves. He was at a loss how to continue the conversation. He wanted desperately that it should go on.

"See anything you like?" he ventured at length. Then he wondered whether he had struck a false note.

She turned.

"Thank you," she said gravely.

"For what?"

"For thinking that I might be interested in something besides novels and the latest magazines. Most professors regard us—I mean girls—as a necessary evil."

"Necessary, but not an evil," was all he could return.

"When I was in your history class two years ago," she went on audaciously, and he did not know how her heart was thumping, "I used to wonder what you thought as you looked at us through those awful glasses of yours."

"Were my glasses awful?"

"Of course I was only a freshman then." He refrained from smiling at the implication of sudden maturity. "I had a front seat, you know—and you used to glare at me through your glasses when you called on me, and it used to scare me right out of my boots!"

He laughed self-consciously at this picture of himself.

"I'm very sorry," he said. "You were one of my prize students, too."

For some reason this seemed to displease her. She became occupied with the bookcase, and he was glad of it, for it gave him opportunity to look at her back, at any rate, and he did not dare, after his first blunder, stare her in the face again. He wondered whether she thought he was shy, and would have been outraged to know that she did.

"I'd like to read this some time," she said, indicating a bulky pair of volumes, "Taylor's *The Mediæval Mind*. You spoke of it in class, and I've never been able to get it at the library."

It oddly thrilled him to hear her say this, and, since he was timid, he was perhaps too ingenuous to say that this was a student dodge to "work" the professor.

"Take it," he said.

"Oh, may I?" she paused. "I really *like* to read," she continued defensively. "Most girls at the house don't. But what's a college education for? When must I bring it back?"

"When you get through with it," he said. "Come back then and get something else."

He tried to keep his voice impersonal and scientific.

She tucked the first volume under her arm.

"I think I'll read them one at a time," she said, and looked at her wrist watch. "Gracious! I've been here *hours!* Oh, I'm terribly sorry to have disturbed you this way."

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed, and she looked at him brightly, and curtseyed to him with mock solemnity.

Then, remembering that he was a college professor, she was troubled by her own temerity, and he thought she was wondering whether the two boys were still outside. He did not like those boys.

"I'll look," he said gaily, and went to open the door. "The coast is clear. But you don't have to go."

This seemed to him very bold, but he ventured it.

"Oh, I must. And thank you for the book." In hurrying out (he never knew how frightened she was) she dropped the pin with the bit of cloth, but he did not notice it.

"Good-by, Miss Adams. Come again."

He offered his hand, she took it timidly, and was off like a startled deer.

As he shut the door, the little gold pin glittered on the floor in the afternoon sun. He picked it up, and saw that she was a Gamma, but she was gone before he got to the door.

He looked out the window in the hope of catching her. She was crossing the campus, her golden head carried in that

superb, youthful way he had first noticed in her, and his book was under her arm. It comforted him that she was not with some one, for, if they had been talking and laughing together, he would have been certain that they were talking of him, and that she was telling how she had blundered into his office. He started to call to her, then suddenly he changed his mind, and put the sorority pin in his pocket. Greatly daring, he had decided to make its return the excuse for a call.

II

It was a week before he did it. Looking forward to the event he was filled alternately with a delicate feeling of pleasure and a hot-cold sensation that he was making a fool of himself. He tried to say that students came to his office a dozen times a day; that he was a faculty member and therefore in student eyes of a race inscrutable and apart; that he was thirty-three and a man of the world (he managed the phrase only after a self-conscious grin), whereas Peggy Adams was—was she nineteen or twenty-two? Nineteen is a delightful age, but he hoped she was twenty-two. But even twenty-two lags eleven years behind thirty-three.

He called himself names, asked himself hotly what his colleagues would think of him, and even as he spoke Shippey's image wickedly presented itself. Nobody seemed to mind because Shippey displayed a normal interest in womankind. But then, he was not Shippey. Besides, what was to him an event, to Margaret Adams was merely an episode. Probably she had forgotten it already. But even as he struggled to persuade himself, he saw again the golden afternoon, the glorious hair, and the slim, young figure with the serious eyes asking him for his copy of Taylor, assuring him that she had a serious mind. She wouldn't have said that unless—, but he knew so little about girls.

Ordinarily he could not have chosen a worse evening. It was Friday night; and on Friday nights such members of the Gamma sorority as were not escorted to the numerous college dances sat with the young men who were interested in them, in nooks and corners of the house by twos. But on this particular evening it rained; by eight-thirty (when he had summoned up his courage to go) the last taxi had departed with the last couple; there was no danger of callers, and of the three occupants of the house, one was in bed with a cold, one (the house mother) had thankfully recognized that she had a free evening to spend quietly in her own part of the house, and Margaret Adams sat cosily before the fire in the big downstairs living room.

She came to answer his ring. It vexed her that she was in another middy blouse and that, from sprawling on the couch, her hair was again a "mess," but to him these facts were grateful because they reminded him of their first encounter and bridged over the awkwardness of their second.

"Oh, Mr. Ranfield!" she exclaimed. "Do come in. Are you very wet?"

All the way up the avenue he had wondered how he would ever get into the house, how he would ask for her, what she would think, but her anxiety over his dripping hat and wet shoes made him forget everything else.

"I don't like rubbers," he said, "and I'm afraid I'll spoil your nice, clean floor. I ought to have had more sense."

"Nonsense," she protested vigorously, but inwardly she was in a flutter. Why had he come? Was it—could it be to see her, he—a faculty member? How could she manage to slip away and tidy herself—put on another frock? Something of this inquiry must have appeared in her face, for in the archway of the living room he paused.

"I've come to return an article of yours. But I hope you'll let me stay?" The note of interrogation in his voice was really pathetic, had she not been in too great a tumult to notice it; he wondered how on earth Shippey managed this sort of thing.

"My fraternity pin!" she exclaimed. He gave it to her. He could think of nothing better to do than blow his nose. "Oh, I'm delighted! I've been adver-

tising in the *Crimson* since Tuesday." The *Crimson* was the college paper.

"I'm afraid I don't read the want ads in the *Crimson*," he said, and somehow they got themselves beautifully before the fire.

"Oh, don't you?" she said joyously, still holding her pin. "I do. They're such fun. I find out what my friends have lost." He resolved to devote half-an-hour a day to the classified advertising. "Joe Marsh has been teasing me for a week." No, he would not read the *Crimson*. She fastened the pin to her middy. "Now, if you will excuse me—"

"What for?" he said blankly.

She dimpled. "It is evident you haven't been calling on the sororities much. You should never ask a young lady that. How do you know I don't want to powder my nose?"

"Look here," he said, fascinated by her dimple, "here's a fire, and I don't care how you look—really now. Why can't you—? Please forget I'm a professor," he pleaded boyishly, conscious that he had blundered. "I—I adore fires, especially on rainy nights. I was hoping you would have a hearth, and a fire."

So they sat down on the big divan in front of the chimney-place, when she had replenished the fire, and because he found it much easier to talk to her than he had anticipated, he soon lost his self-consciousness, and she, because of the friendliness of his manner, forgot her middy blouse and her muddy shoes, and chattered on as though he were any college boy. They talked about shoes and ships and sealing wax and the university, and how the curriculum should be re-arranged (this subject is always discussed when two persons, however remotely connected with a university, get together) and he told her two of his best stories (one had been a great success at the president's dinner), whereat she laughed very much, and she told him an anecdote or two about sorority life which made him chuckle, and then they fell silent, gazing at the fire. And because he was very timid, he wondered whether this was a sign that he ought to go (it was actually twenty minutes past nine by the clock), and for the same reason he found himself quite unable to say a word, and began to wonder how he was ever going to get out of the scrape he had got into. And she, because he was a learned man and she respected him a great deal, wondered whether she had bored him very much, and for the hundredth time asked herself why Professor Ranfield, who was supposed rather to look down on students, had come to see her.

"I suppose I ought to go," he said abstractedly, as though it were an impersonal historical problem he were considering. "But do you know you've made me forget for the first time in I don't know how many years that I'm a college professor and dreadfully learned, and all of thirty-three?"

"Is it very bad—being learned, I mean? I wish I knew something."

"You do," he said impulsively, "you know how to live. The trouble with being a teacher is that you are expected to have the emotions of an encyclopædia—a very dry encyclopædia."

Then she listened sympathetically to an account of his various occupations, and how he hated most of them.

"And all the time I was delivering the paper," he concluded, "I was wondering whether I had a cigarette in my pocket and whether they had a restaurant with a good jazz orchestra in the town."

In short, it was a completely successful evening—looking back at it, he thought of it as an evening of rare and tender beauty—except that at a quarter to ten the telephone rang, and she got up to answer it. As it was in the next room, he could not help hearing her.

"Why, Joe!" she said, and her voice seemed to him as joyous and eager as when she had exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Ranfield!" at the front door. "Yes, I've found it," she said. "Oh, go on!" and he knew she was talking to Joe Marsh about the sorority emblem, and he was perversely hurt because she did not say how it got back to her.

Was she ashamed that he had come to

see her? But if she had told Joe Marsh precisely how and why she had recovered her pin, he would have been more indignant. So he was compelled to remember that he was a college professor, after all, and when, after five minutes of gay badinage, she returned to him, he felt immensely old, because that sort of talk over the telephone seemed utterly silly to him, and he rose to go.

"Must you go?" she said.

She felt a change in him, at which she was vaguely hurt, and she decided not to explain that she couldn't very well shut Joe Marsh off.

In the endeavour to conceal the wound his manner gave her, she masked her chagrin in the politest of society voices which confirmed him in his belief that she thought him a good deal of bore, and so they parted, neither quite knowing what was the matter. She asked him to come again, but he missed the warmth he so loved in her voice, and when he assured her, in rather academic speech that he would, she felt that he had snubbed her.

"Whatever did I do to him?" she asked herself as she leaned her back against the front door when she had closed it behind him.

She went soberly back to the fireplace and stared at it, and because she found herself wondering if—if he could be a bit in love with her, she blushed furiously, put her hands to her cheeks, and ran upstairs to bed.

As he went down the steps to the shining sidewalk, he said "Damn!" a great many times because he felt that he was a good deal of an idiot, and when he happened to pass Shippey under an arc-light, he spoke to him so brusquely that poor Shippey stopped and stared after him to see who the stranger was he had affronted.

Then Professor Ranfield went up to his solitary bachelor apartments in the Astoria, where, divesting himself of hat and coat, he took down a big book called *Controversial Issues in Scottish History* wherein he read that John Emery Ross (whoever he might be) attributed the victory of Kenneth MacAlpin over the Picts to Margaret Adams, and that Margaret Adams was queen of Scotland in 1302. These extraordinary facts should have aroused his scepticism as a scholar, but they did not. When, however, he found Margaret Adams at the head of a quotation from Lamer's *Dictionary of Family Names* he left her there, and went soberly to bed.

When he awoke next morning he firmly decided that calling at sorority houses was not for the likes of him. So he lectured vigorously for a week on trade routes in southern France in the middle ages, and the freshmen at the Gamma house raged furiously against him, to the vast amusement of their elders. Also he began a very determined article to prove that somebody or other was little better than a moron for saying that surnames were first used by the nobility of England in 1061. By this means he strove to drive the memory of his folly out of his head, and he so far succeeded that he made himself believe he had called on Margaret Adams very long ago—probably in the Dark Ages, when he was a boy and silly. Therefore, when he passed her on the campus, he bowed to her very politely but barely spoke. Because she had found him different from all her other friends, this hurt her a second time, and she wondered how she could have been so silly as to think— How was she going to get his old book back to him?

They might have become good friends even then, if she had not been the popular girl he admired her for being. But he saw her on the campus six times with Joe Marsh, three times with Jimmie Oliver, the half-back, twice with Fountain Wyant, editor of the *Crimson*, and individual times with various other youths, most of whom he did not know. And because she laughed and chatted with each of them in the same eager way, he felt resentful, and though of course they spoke to each other, since he still felt immensely old and very superior to the callow youths she seemed to prefer, they did nothing more than speak.

In the middle of June he found a note on his desk:

DEAR MR. RANFIELD:

I put Taylor on the shelf again. As I am going away Friday I shan't be able to borrow Taylor II. Thank you for letting me have him. Don't you think the mystics are fascinating?

Yours sincerely,
MARGARET ADAMS.

The re-reading of this brief message did not solve the puzzle of why he should feel hurt as he stood by his desk in the sunlit office awaiting for the forming of the commencement procession. If he had tried to convince himself that he had completely forgotten Margaret Adams, the hollow failure of his attempt was now completely evident, for her note made him feel as awkward and hurt and adolescent as had the termination of his call. He crumpled the paper to show that he did not care, and then made a wry face because he did care, put on his hat, and left for the exercises in the armoury.

III

RANFIELD spent most of the summer in Chicago, where he immured himself in the university library to the admiration and despair of his colleagues on the summer faculty who found their classes ample occupation for the August heat. There he piled up quantities of notes on several sufficiently obscure medieval problems, and really forgot his silliness of the preceding spring.

At the end of a term of teaching he went north into the Canadian woods as he had done for six years, and canoed and tramped and fished himself into a better humour with the world. He fancied he had forgotten the dreariness of university life until his reluctance in turning south, the dead, leaden weight of responsibility and scholarship which he felt at the preliminary fall faculty meeting, proved only too well that like the Bourbons he had learned nothing and forgotten nothing. But the summer, he fancied, had brought him resignation no less than health. Dreams of renewing his youth like the eagle were now definitely behind him. Why should he deny it? He was middle-aged, he was respectable, he was academic. He was growing old.

Since he felt that way it is remarkable that the third football game of the season found him picking his way among the slowly moving crowd which trickled through the gates of Hershel Field. It was the more remarkable because he had not attended a football game for five years. Then the spectacle had lost its flavour. The thrill when the band played the varsity toast and the bleachers rose to attention had long ago vanished, but when he found that the amusement he had thereupon begun to extract from the sight was dwindling also, he ceased going altogether. But this Saturday afternoon he had had the fidgets. A long walk devoted to bitter introspection had not improved his temper, and when he returned again to the college district about three o'clock and found a general movement toward the athletic field, he yielded to impulse and drifted with the tide. Viewing himself objectively, it had seemed to him something of a scientific experiment.

He suffered the usher (whom he recognized vaguely as a sophomore student of his) to lead him up the steep grandstand and indicate a seat. Then suddenly the gray day, the crowd, the bitter wind, the colours, and the teams, knotted in opposing groups at either end of the bare field, took on for him a new and brilliant meaning. Margaret Adams was sitting, not beside him, it is true, but just below.

He did not recognize her at first. After apologizing to a plump woman in a purple suit, who glared as he bumped against her befeathered hat, he had taken his seat and studied with melancholy indifference the advertising on the score-card. It was then that the tone of a laugh, vibrant, youthful, alive, caught his ear. He looked around him. Surely it was she. The alert body, the golden hair (she did *not* wear ear-puffs, therefore it must be Margaret Adams, he reasoned, and any beginner in logic

could have done better), the black tam-o'-shanter—he could not be mistaken. He leaned forward.

"Miss Adams!" he said eagerly, and rose.

She looked brightly around. In the unenforced cordiality of her surprise all fears of embarrassing her fled away. He was never quite sure how in the awkwardness of their relative positions she managed to shake hands with him without getting up, or how she manœuvred him out of the way of newcomers into the vacant place beside her. She was alone—why or how, he was too absurdly happy to care.

Between quarters he found himself eagerly telling her of his Canadian adventures and asking interestedly after her own concerns. Otherwise she watched the game attentively, making intelligent comments that were quite beyond his depth; and in the intensity of her partisanship, he found a source of joy. Once, when a player was taken out, apparently crippled, he noted that she failed to utter any of the "oh's" and "ah's" of feminine commiseration he had heard from other women, and her lack of sentimentality pleased him, too. He was glad also that she gave the college yells and songs with so much spirit, though he for the most part stood mute beside her; and the contagion of her enthusiasm so affected him that he leaped to his feet and excitedly waved his hat when the opposition line stiffened unexpectedly with Mitchell just ten yards from the goal.

When they talked again, it was with no consciousness of being teacher and student, but rather as friend with friend, and he thought the summer had deepened her experience and tact, not realizing that she was unaffectedly glad to see him and to be convinced that he did not scorn her (as she had supposed) for a mere college student.

At the end of the game, he found himself unaffectedly at her side piloting her through the good-humoured noisy crowd. Once the antics of a group of boys, serpentining down the field, threw the crowd against them, and she clung to his arm to steady herself, looking up at him in smiling explanation with what he thought was the divinest look in the world. He felt again the absurd joy which surged up in him when he had first heard her voice and he knew somehow that his youth could return. But did she think him old?

They got out of the gate at length, and turned with a portion of the thinning crowd down University Avenue. She had dropped his arm, and they walked side by side with good strides, so that Shippey, when he passed them (why was he always running into Shippey?) stared at them and wondered how Ranfield's vacation had changed him and who the dame was that he had with him.

"I met a great friend of yours this summer," she said when they were in a quieter part of the street. "Professor Trexham of Columbia."

"Trexham?" he exclaimed joyously. "Where on earth did you run into Trexham?"

"Up on Cape Cod. We spent three weeks there. They had the cottage next to ours. Mrs. Trexham is a dear."

He heartily agreed.

"You really ought to write to your friends," she continued. "I couldn't tell him half what he wanted to know. He said he hadn't heard from you since—oh, I don't know how long."

So he asked her how Trexham was, and because she had spoken of him, he got into quite a glow about Trexham and resolved to write him that night, though he did not.

They were at the sorority house before he realized it. At the sight of groups of boys and girls standing in front of the place, his heart gave a sudden leap, and his spirit sank as he recognized some of his own students, who stared at him curiously and then looked consciously away. What would they think of him, and what would they say? But Miss Adams, either because she did not notice the evident interest, or because she did not care, continued to talk of the Trexhams until they were at the porch steps.

"Must you go?" she said, as he moved to depart. "I'm awfully glad I decided to go to the game after all." She held out her hand.

Somehow it came so naturally to ask her when he might come again that he utterly forgot to be timid.

"Of course you must," she said. "Telephone me—and won't you come to open house next week?" she went on with sudden shyness, remembering, after all, that he was not a student. "Please do. I know the men laugh at such things, but you must come."

"I'd like to see them laugh," he replied with burlesque bravado, and even the palpable sham of it did not spoil her perfect manner.

Her laugh gave him courage to walk briskly away, bowing to the girls he knew and even stopping to discuss the game with one loitering couple who were too amazed to do more than gasp yes or no to his questions.

The afternoon of the open house found him perplexedly considering the question of costume. At length he wisely put aside thoughts of more formal garb and went in a business suit that became him very well. He could hear the chatter of voices from the street. A girl, unknown to him, met him at the door with the solicitude of the socially inexperienced, and showed him where to put his coat and hat. To his excited eye the house seemed terrifyingly full of unknown people. His heart sank.

"Hello," said a voice. "Didn't know you went in for this sort of thing. Meet Miss McCallum. Miss McCallum—Dr. Ranfield."

It was Shippey.

For once in his life Ranfield was glad to meet him. He shook hands with "Miss McCallum," a fluffy-haired, shallow-brained little sophomore, and they chatted together on indifferent things, Miss McCallum punctuating Shippey's heavy jocularity with soft cooings and little screams of interest and fascination.

Ranfield felt thoroughly ill at ease. Then a strange girl in an electric blue gown came up to him and with deadly intent asked him whether he had been served, and Ranfield was dragged captive at her heels to the dining-room where, from a table set with six great candles, two or three other girls were serving tea and little cakes. His conductor, having got a cup into his hands, obviously felt that her duties were ended, for she dived back into the reception room, and the girls at the table, seeing that he was a faculty member, were struck with sudden shyness. He stood awkwardly holding his tea-cup and munching the sticky squares of cake.

A flood of young girls and college boys entered. He backed up against the wall. A feminine voice floated to his ear.

"They're going to be married in the spring."

"I don't believe it, Di. I never thought she liked Joe Marsh especially."

"Well, he's got scads of money, and Peggy's used to having all she wants."

"I don't believe it," the second girl repeated sceptically.

Ranfield was conscious of a deep interest in their conversation. He could make out that the speakers were standing by the other side of the palm-tree next to him, and following their gaze, he saw Margaret Adams standing with Joe Marsh across the room. He was forced to admit that Marsh looked very well.

"I'll bet you a box of candy they announce their engagement by Thanksgiving," the first speaker resumed. "The Adams's will never let Peg marry anybody without money. And Joe's got it."

Suddenly aware that he was eavesdropping, Ranfield conscientiously moved away to the table where he left his cup. He was angry with himself for caring to remain. As he left the table, Miss Adams caught sight of him.

"Oh, Professor Ranfield!" she exclaimed. She had not called him "Professor Ranfield" at the football game.

Ranfield bowed and took her hand.

"You know Mr. Marsh," she hinted, and Ranfield shook hands with Marsh, who grinned.

Miss Adams began a brilliant account of the afternoon she had taken refuge in Ranfield's office, but she was

forced to break off and turn away, leaving the two men ill at ease.

"Well, glad to have met you, doctor," Marsh said, and shook Ranfield's hand. "See you later, Peg," he called.

Miss Adams smiled at him and he turned away. The familiar phrase, the smile, all seemed to Ranfield proof of what he had overheard.

Miss Adams came back to him in a moment. Her manner apologized for the exigencies of the social situation.

"Your house is very pretty," he said, and chatted impersonally with her about nothing, until she brought two or three others to meet him, and he found himself the centre of a small group.

Then Margaret disappeared; he looked for her in vain, and began to make his way back to the front hall, resolved to go and wishing he had never come.

"Must you leave?" she said, appearing from another door by the foot of the staircase.

"I'm afraid so," he said. "It's been very delightful. Very kind of you to think of me."

The heartiness rang hollow but he did not care.

She looked at him with a faintly mocking smile.

"I'm one of the hostesses for the afternoon," she said, with an affect of explaining her neglect of him, but before they could continue, she was forced to turn and bid farewell to a group of departing guests. Ranfield secured his coat and hat and left the house.

IV

He met her next at the Monroes' three weeks later. The intervening time had not been a pleasant one, for he knew now that he was in love with her and the prospect of inevitably losing her did not lighten the gloom which surrounded him.

She was separated from him by a thousand impalpable barriers such as only the little world of college life keenly knows. He was a faculty member, and therefore immensely old; and she was a student, and therefore immensely young. She was a sorority member and around her were drawn the indefinable lines of social caste which are even harder to break than the charmed circle of the socially elect in the great world outside. And always (how bitterly he knew it!) he was in his thirties and she was merely on the threshold of life and youth and joy. What could he, an authority on medieval France, mean to her whose life was young and objective and exuberant? And he pictured her in a futuristic compound of dances, walks for two, and student irresponsibility, not realizing that beneath the picturesque surface of college life there is a secret and fugitive world of hopes and dreams and stern, pure purposes. And lastly, if he married her, how people would talk!

The Monroes were giving a dinner and a musicale. When he saw her across the table (he had known she was to be there, but he remembered she was a niece of Mrs. Monroe's), looking positively lovely in a shimmering green evening gown, into the colour of which her hair melted like a golden rain, the beauty and the pathos of the picture choked him until he could hardly speak. The table talk sounded in his ears like a dull hum. He dared not look at her. He could not eat, but he drank glass after glass of water until at length it attracted Monroe's attention, when he began to joke him about it, and Ranfield looked up with a quick, frightened smile.

Then he roused himself, and began to talk politics to Mrs. Monroe, glancing as often as he dared down the table to the golden head and the eager face that summed up for him all that he wanted and dreamed.

He would ask her this evening. He was resolved. They would steal away from the musicale and in some dim, sheltered nook in Monroe's great house, he could tell her all she meant to him. Surely she would understand. Surely, as he poured forth to her all the loneliness of his life, as he told her what it meant to have one's youth slipping away from one like flowing water, what

great need he had for laughter and joy, surely she would understand. His great need must win her. She would bring to him her great gift of youth, telling him to help himself as from a golden urn, to use it for ever and for ever. Would the dinner never come to an end?

They were taking away the dessert plates. Greatly daring, he looked her full in the face, and she smiled at him brightly. At a word from Mrs. Monroe, they all got up and went into the living room. He went straight to Miss Adams.

"How do you do?" she said. "I never dreamed of your coming. Cousin Nell never said a word. But it's awfully nice!"

"Yes, I think it is, too," he said meaningly, and turned to give her a demi-tasse from the tray Monroe was carrying around. She sat down by a table where the lamplight glimmered in her hair, and he stood before her sipping his coffee. His heart beat wildly, he felt weak, as he had when he had taken the examination for his doctor's degree, and his face was so pale that it vaguely troubled her, but that night she was too happy to inquire into the causes of things.

When the company had at length settled itself in the big living-room, there came an expectant hush as they waited for the programme to begin. Ranfield moved away from Miss Adams to the wall behind her so that she might have a better view of the piano, and then gave up his cup to the maid. Mrs. Monroe advanced toward him. To his surprise Miss Adams stood up also. He did not know that she played. That complicated matters. How would he ever get her out of the room and to himself?

As Mrs. Monroe came toward her the girl's face paled a little.

"Please, aunty, not now," she laughed nervously.

Her aunt smiled at her indulgently and put her arm around Margaret's waist. They faced the room.

"Before we have our programme," she said to the company, "I have a little surprise for you. Margaret wouldn't let me give her a party, but I told her I simply had to tell somebody, or burst. She and Joseph Marsh are to be married in the spring."

There was a chorus of exclamations and a general movement toward the pair, which fortunately concealed Ranfield as he stood gripping the wall behind him with desperate hands. One by one the guests spoke their congratulations. He must move, he must act, but his legs refused their office. Could he control his voice? She was moving toward him, the guests were re-seating themselves, and a fat woman was adjusting the piano bench to her needs.

"Aren't you going to congratulate me, Mr. Ranfield?" Margaret Adams said as she sat down by the table.

"Yes," he said, "I—I do."

She looked at him. Some dim memory of the night he had called came to her mind, but she was too happy to think of anything so absurd as to suppose he cared for her. Before she could think further, the music began, the MacDowell Polonaise played by the fat woman whose name Ranfield did not know. He stood behind her in the shadow, and the light from the table played dreamily over her hair. A brilliant solitaire gleamed on her hand, laid negligently on the arm of the chair, and he stared at it as if fascinated while the rhythm of the polonaise beat dully at his ears. He felt immensely tired, and wondered whether he might sit down. The pianist, in response to applause, played the Chopin nocturne in C minor. Would she never cease? And why must she choose that particular nocturne to torture him with the memory of all that he might not have?

The music stopped and the performer rose.

"I do congratulate you," he said, leaning forward over Miss Adams's chair, "and I hope you will be very happy."

Never had his academic manner stood him in better stead.

"Thank you." She laughed brightly. "You know, you're really responsible, Dr. Ranfield. Joe says that when I hid in your office last spring, it made him jealous. We've been engaged since last June."

The music began again.

CHATTELS

By R. J. Singler

MY grandparents and parents are dead, I have never been married, and I detest my brothers and sisters, my nephews and nieces and cousins. But I have a pretty good sense of humour. In the padlocked steel strong box under my bed they will find, when I am dead, instead of the stocks and bonds and currency and gold-pieces which they suspect it contains, the following articles: a brittle plug of Star chewing-tobacco, a package of fire-crackers, a jew's-harp, a Mitchell Palmer campaign button, a link of Metwurst, a Mexican jumping-bean, and a copy of *The Saturday Evening Post.*

VESTIGIA

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

ROSES are dust. Where we delayed
Long hours, an old gray Weaver weaves
Garlands of shadowy flowers that fade
Unseen among the brittle leaves.

Even where dust and roses meet,
Where white and crimson, mingled, lie
Trodden beneath the cruel feet
Of other lovers, crowding by—

Oh, even there some lingering breath
Of beauty will be left to make
More regal what is given to Death
When passion passes, and heart-break!

Girl, though impiteous winds have torn
The groves and gardens, let us be
Proud and untearful, who have worn
Roses a while, imperiously!

THE CHEATERS

By Newton A. Fuessle

I

THE frosty air of late afternoon entered Mallong's blood like a shower of minute spurs. His springy stride was carrying him rapidly toward the bus line on Fifth Avenue. He was still young enough, still confident enough, to feel at his best at this twilight hour. The day's work out of the way, a cleared desk behind him, and the consciousness of a complex job well done—all this provided him with material for pleasant reflections.

From the foyer of an hotel issued a stream of primrose light. A sudden impulse carried him in. A glance at his watch verified his impression that it was still fairly early, and he resolved to loiter for a few minutes in the pleasant warmth of the foyer. His appointment with Hariet still permitted him forty-five minutes. He would indulge in a little reverie and smoke a short cigar—one could always obtain fresh Havanas here; he detested a cigar that had been rolled for more than four or five weeks; they always lost something.

He sank into one of the wing chairs of velour, a lavish thing, the hue of cream, and gave himself up to very satisfactory reflections indeed. From another part of the hotel came chamber music of a delicacy that reminded him at once of Bizet. "As delicate as Bizet"—he rather liked the phrase; it had occurred to him the other day at one of the concerts at the Philharmonic to which Hariet had dragged him.

Devil of a good sort, Hariet, he mused. After five years of married life, they were still the best of pals. Others of their crowd who had married at about the same time had hit the rocks with loud reports. Mallong was grateful that he and Hariet had been spared that sort of thing. He shrank from subjecting her to any of this vulgar publicity. Even for himself, he would have hated it.

It was usually the man's fault, of course. They bungled their way into affairs without the slightest subtlety. There wasn't any sense in that. Poor old Langham, for instance. Ass that he was, he had installed an atrocious creature in an apartment less than a five minutes' walk from his home. Tiring of her a few months later, he had undertaken to end the affair, with the customary result. The offended baggage had gone to his wife and told her everything. What an absurd position for a man to get himself into! Mallong could not imagine himself guilty of any such idiotic conduct.

However, cautious as he was, he had not been without his supplementary romances—far from it! He had enjoyed his share of philandering, and by Jove, he proposed to continue enjoying it. He had developed a method that reduced the element of risk to the minimum. He was convinced that he had built up a technique that embodied the highest attainable degree of freedom from disclosure. He proposed to do the right thing by Hariet—to guard her painstakingly against finding him out. It would break her heart if she ever did. Men were brutes to let such things reach the point of discovery; if

a man had any sense of devotion to his wife, the least he could do was to guard her against such blasting disillusionments.

It was such a simple matter, after all, to do one's more or less harmless stepping with the requisite care. Mallong's secret consisted of a simple little phrase: "One kiss only." Restraint was the thing. A single episode, no continuity, no strings, no hangover, no prolonged affairs. Men were usually such hogs. Unwilling to let go, they kept up the pursuit, and so let themselves in for all manner of responsibilities, obligations, expectations. They allowed themselves to grow to care too much; they encouraged the woman to develop a sense of proprietorship that led invariably to melodrama.

One episode, reflected Mallong serenely, and no more. Its compensations were many; its dangers next to none. It enabled him to keep his identity concealed, his name, his connections. Even the image of a face soon blurs into indistinct outlines among the multitudes that dwell in New York. One episode per charmer, and none of them would "have anything on him"—or at least not much. Let an affair be sudden; let it flare for only its moment, and then go out. A man was a fool to remain at the table and eat himself full. One should observe delicacy in these things—the delicacy of Bizet—a pretty phrase, that.

Mallong had carefully reasoned it all out. His intelligence told him how absurd it was to be running about town with Hariet, oppressed by that sense of guilt and entanglement that is bound to come with a prolonged and serious intrigue. No woman could be trusted with such a secret as that. A wise old dowager had once said to him, on the eve of his marriage: "Keep nothing from Hariet. No matter what you do, go to her and tell her. If she loves you, she'll forgive you. She is sure to find it out in the end; she can forgive anything more readily than deceit. And those women are sure to tell."

Mallong recognized that there was truth in the statement. When the break finally occurred, and it always did, what woman, considering herself wronged, could resist flinging the facts into the teeth of the man's wife, if he had one? It was no more than human, certainly no more than feminine. Let one pursue one's romancing without sentimentality; that was the thing. Mallong shrank from nothing more than from the grip of sentimentality. It could cause no end of mess. It always did. Held free of the clutching hand of sentimentality, the thing resolved itself into a fine fragment of paganism, a glistening memory, an emotional comet, nothing more.

He pitied these fellows who never knew when they were going to be rung up on the telephone, who kept themselves bothered with demands, complaints, whining and rebuke. These divided lives must be devilishly irritating; Mallong thought too much of his peace of mind. And Hariet was too fine a woman to be subjected to the menace of scandal. This other method of his, this application of intelligence, of just a little intelligence, was much the kinder to her. Suppose she did become aware of one of these episodes? Very well, his foot had slipped; he could be sorry, frightfully sorry; no loyalty to anybody else could be established; the thing was done and over; she would forget it, would forgive him. Oh, this single episode method was by far the best, reflected Mallong contentedly.

He was now reviewing various memorable and pleasurable enterprises upon which he had embarked. That gorgeous brunette in the coat of squirrel, with a pearl surrounded by a ring of diamonds in each pretty ear, would have laid hold of the attentions of most men for a prolonged and disastrous period. It had required a smart effort of the will to

draw himself out of the field of her magnetism. But it was a right and necessary part of his system; he was not without pride in himself that he had had the strength to abandon this intoxicating affair long before its dregs appeared in the bottom of the cup.

There was sometimes a pleasantly mystifying element about this mode of adventuring. He recalled how, not long since, when at dinner with Hariet at the Lafayette, a slender profile had engaged his attention. The uplifted nostrils, the narrow curve of the eye-brows, the commingled look of mischief and of melancholy in the brownish eyes, the wry twisting of the shapely mouth as she talked to a companion: these details puzzled and troubled him. Was this the young woman whom he had encountered that night at the Claridge? He swept questioning glances at her, wondering and speculating. But he could not make up his mind. Would it have broken Hariet's heart if she had known what thoughts were revolving through his mind? His lines of defence were fairly secure, he thought, comforting himself.

At times his heart ached for his wife, as he conjured up alarming pictures of what she would suffer if the devastating knowledge of his philanderings should ever come to her. How undeserving he was of this trusting woman, what a dog he was! For months now he had walked with straight, unerring step. Nearly three months it must have been since some splendid vision of a strange form and face had set buried chimes in him to ringing with insistence and longing.

II

Mallong consulted his watch. Twenty minutes had passed. He was to meet Hariet in the foyer of another hotel farther up town; they were to dine together. He would have to be starting; he did not like to keep her waiting in a place like that. His eyes roved the room for the last time; a score or more of women were nestled in easy chairs; but none had quickened his imagination.

"Mrs. Fardale! A call for Mrs. Fardale!" sang one of the bell-boys.

Mallong listened to the pleasant syllables of the name which was being called. He did not know when he had heard a prettier name. He wondered what a woman with such a name might look like. With curious eyes he was trailing the receding figure of the bell-boy. Now the latter was pausing. In a far corner of the spacious room a woman had signalled him.

"Wanted on the telephone," Mallong could hear the bell-boy tell her.

The woman rose, and started for the string of booths. Mallong beheld a creature whose fairness was a veritable salute to the eyes. She walked with a grace that was exquisite. Unable to resist, his eyes followed her across the carpet. He had never seen such a neck. Her long white hands seemed made to caress. The old intoxication entered his veins and flowed in a disturbing stream. The perfumed foyer, warm as a hothouse, seemed suddenly to have brought forth a tropical orchid. The golden cones of light, hanging from the russet ceiling, grew warmer and more seductive.

Mallong found it impossible to remain seated. He rose and became aware that he was following in her direction. Outside her telephone booth he hovered, catching notes of the music of the voice within. Her grayish eyes rested upon him for a moment as she emerged, for a longer moment than a casual glance, he fancied. But he knew enough to take nothing for granted. He followed her at a respectful distance. Watchfully, he saw her make her way back to the chair from which she had come. He seated himself nearby.

Now and then her cool eyes moved

in his direction, rested for a moment, and moved on. He was sitting there in a trance, content for the moment to wait and to hope. He inspected the figures before him, wondering what her smile was like. He had known marvellous faces that became common and ignoble when they smiled. Faces were such deceiving, inconclusive things, he was reflecting. Once he had been held spellbound by an enchanting countenance; but later, when he had made the acquaintance of its possessor, he found to his chagrin that she had no more intelligence than a cow. He wondered whether this could be another of those faces without a brain. It seemed impossible. Still, one never could tell.

Again she looked at him. A warmer note sped through her cool gray eyes. His body tingled. He rose quickly, went over to her, and began talking.

"May I sit down and talk to you?" he asked boldly.

"Yes," she answered simply.

"I couldn't help staring at you. You fascinate me. What do you mean by being so beautiful?"

"Flatterer," she said with a smile.

"Are you alone?" he asked.

"I was waiting for someone. He just telephoned that he couldn't come."

"Then will you dine with me?"

"If you like."

"Wait here for me one minute while I telephone," said Mallong.

He hurried to the string of booths, called a number, asked to have Hariet paged.

"Hello, Hariet," he began. "I've got to beg off to-night. I'm awfully sorry, dear. I'm in conference with that man Torrey?"

"With whom?" asked Hariet.

"Torrey. Clark Torrey. You've heard me speak of him many times. We're closing a contract. I may be late. Don't wait up for me. Go right ahead with your dinner. You know how sorry I am, don't you?"

"Of course, dear," said Hariet.

Mallong detected a note of sorrow in her voice. He felt like a criminal. But when those inner chimes began ringing, he was never himself.

"Good-bye, dear, and forgive me," he was saying.

He hung up the receiver, and hurried eagerly back to the enchanting stranger.

"I suppose you telephoned your wife," said she.

"Why do you ask? Do men think first of their wives when they discover you?"

"Some forget their wives when they discover me," was the answer.

III

At about the same time that Mallong had entered the primrose foyer of the hotel, Hariet, his wife, had entered the foyer of another hotel farther uptown. She sank into the soothing cushions of one of its chairs, and snuggled into a comfortable position to wait for him. The warm, perfumed air of the place made her relax after her brisk walk through the biting air. Her cheeks burned pleasantly. She inspected herself in the little mirror of her vanity bag, and found herself looking her best. Feature after feature she scanned and appraised. She had judgment enough to know that she was good-looking. Personally, she had never cared for a retroussé nose, but men, including, of course, Mallong, had raved about its charm.

She was thinking of the changes that had taken place in herself, and in Mallong, during the years of their married life. She had striven to think of him as the romantic figure that had come so unexpectedly into her life. Something in her demanded that she keep thinking of Mallong as that same romantic figure. But as the strangeness and mystery of this man had fallen gradually away, giving place to known and familiar

traits, it had hurt and disappointed her.

The novelty of hearing him say that he loved her had worn off; and Mallong had not taken the pains to invent novel terms in which to state it. The romance of their relations had gradually receded; and the romance of having children had not appeared to take its place. From the beguiling figure that Mallong had once been to her, he had become a commonplace figure. She had listened to him say the same things over and over again, until at times she thought she would have to scream. She respected him but no longer admired him. There were times when she would have been vastly relieved to have him go away on a prolonged business trip; but he was rarely called away from New York. Hariet couldn't remember when he had been away for more than a few days at a time.

To-night, as Hariet vaguely watched the people coming and going in the foyer, she was hungry for romance. She found herself constructing imaginary personalities around different faces. She marvelled at the charm of some of the women. She imagined that if she were a man she would follow some of these exquisite creatures and learn to know them. She didn't see how a man could help it. She wondered that Mallong had never done that sort of thing? Or had he? No, it was impossible. She quite dismissed the thought. Mallong was too sedate, too utterly unromantic and unimaginative for any such thing.

A sudden thought darted across the path of her reveries. This bourgeois devotion of Mallong's to her really made her impatient with him. She wondered that she had never thought of it in just that way before. It was a fact. Confound it, if he were only not so everlastingly true to her! It made her feel caged. It made her feel wicked even to look at another man. Not that she wanted to do anything that wasn't proper. But one had one's dreams. She realized almost with a start that for weeks now her thoughts had been fastened upon one of the men who had wanted to marry her. She had liked him, but had treated him like a dog. She realized now how perverse and unreasonable she had been. After all, she might have been able to love him much more than she had ever loved Mallong. Sometimes she found herself imagining that Mallong was the other, and it gave her an intense but guilty comfort.

Again and again, Hariet had felt inside her a fluttering of wings, the tug of a desire for more freedom. She thought of it now. Freedom—but what would she do with it if she had it? It was unthinkable that she should ever yield to any of these fantastic impulses that came upon her at times. Yet, why not? A few more years, and her youth would be gone. She grew weak when she thought of it. What was youth for, if it was not to use? It seemed an awful thing to think of her youth ebbing away, stamping out its desires every time they lifted their voices. She wasn't living. Good heavens, this wasn't living at all.

The throb of music came to her ears and travelled seductively through her nerves, bringing incredible fancies. She had presented her youth to Mallong, and he did not even take it. He wasn't at all the kind of husband she had wanted; she realized it now. The kind of love she craved had at times come to her in flashes from the pages of books; had come to her in taunting revelations from the manner of other men toward women; had appeared to her in passionate scenes upon the stage; had blinded her with poignant yearning when listening to the rush of great music.

There was something lacking in Mallong. He was growing tired of her. Then why didn't he do what other men did? Why didn't he take his freedom and grant her hers? Why this mocking pose, this dreary acting, this deadening pretence? Hariet clenched her firm young

hands; resentment coursed through her in fierce currents; unaccustomed desires beat through her strong young body.

She was aroused by the calling of her name. A page told her that she was wanted on the telephone.

"Hello, Hariet," she heard her husband say. "I've got to beg off tonight. I'm awfully sorry, dear. I'm in conference with that man Torrey."

"With whom?" she asked.

"Torrey. Clark Torrey. You've heard me speak of him many times. We're closing a contract. I may be late. Don't wait up for me. Go right ahead with your dinner. You know how sorry I am, don't you?"

"Of course, dear," she replied quietly.

Hariet returned to her chair, reflecting that it was business, always business, that kept Mallong away. And he always telephoned her if he was compelled to be away, always explained. He left nothing unexplained, left nothing for her to surmise, furnished her with no mystery to feed upon. There was never anything to suspect him of. Other wives had cause to believe that their husbands cheated; hers had never cheated; he had never even given Hariet cause to suspect that he cheated. It intensified her feeling of being caged. She held it against him.

At any rate, Mallong wasn't coming. It was just as well. It would give her a further opportunity to sit here and dream. She rather welcomed the opportunity. She didn't know when she had ever looked herself so boldly in the face.

Hariet raised her eyes, and found someone else looking her boldly in the face. Her eyes met his for a moment in frank surprise. Her glance showed her a man of uncommon appearance. He averted his eyes respectfully, and she sat studying his profile. It had strength and intelligence; it had breeding; it looked romantic. She found herself appraising him with interest. She liked the way he handled his cigar. A strange trepidation entered her veins, and flowed in a disturbing stream through her body.

Now he was looking at her again; and again she met his eyes with a look of frankness. And then a faint, courageous smile wavered to her lips.

Instantly he was at her side.

"May I?" he asked, drawing up a chair.

"I don't know. I don't think you'd better," she replied with alarm at what she had done.

"Nonsense. There isn't the slightest harm," he answered.

"I never did such a thing before in my life," she said faintly.

"I believe that," he said.

"You must think I'm a terrible flirt," she said in her agitation.

"There isn't the slightest element of the flirt about you."

"You don't think that," she challenged.

"Yes I do. I could not help staring. You fascinate me. You are bewildering," he answered.

Hariet's attractive face wore a deepening flush. It was years since she had listened to such words. A sense of delicious alarm was spreading through her. She was cheating; and her husband never did!

"Have you dined?" the man was asking.

Hariet shook her head. She was thinking of her husband at dinner with Clark Torrey, talking business, closing contracts.

"Then come; have dinner with me."

Hariet surveyed her companion again. A new lift and urge laid hold of her; she seemed to have dreamed something like this.

In a few minutes they were seated together on the velvet bench that lined the walls of the ornate dining room. The orchestra was playing teasing bars imported from Vienna. Her host was conversing with quiet ease. It was quite as though they had formally met by conventional introduction. It was a thing of novelty

and exhilaration, this nearness to the strength and charm of this agreeable stranger. So this was cheating? If only her husband had not always walked so straight, she reflected. If only her provider were not battling at this moment for a contract with Mr. Clark Torrey.

The man's quiet voice grew intense.

"Now that I've found you, I'm not going to lose track of you," he said. "You bewildering thing! You sparkle like a goblet of wine. Come! You're coming with me."

Hariet went like one traversing a dream. The gleaming pagan in her had stepped fearlessly forward, pressing aside the caution of centuries, the restraint of innumerable generations.

An hour later her companion stamped his final kisses upon her face.

"Where can I reach you by telephone?" he asked.

"Then you've got to call me up. If you don't, I'll scour this town to find you."

IV

HARIET stared at the card he had handed to her. Her eyes were transfixed.

"This isn't your name!" she exclaimed.

"That's my name," he assured her.

"You can't be Mr. Torrey!"

"Is there anything so startling about the name Clark Torrey?" he demanded.

"Do you swear that you are Clark Torrey?" she questioned.

"I swear it," he said soberly.

A wave of comfort and satisfaction streamed through Hariet. Then her husband was not in conference with Clark Torrey to-night! Then he had lied to her! Then, he, too, was a cheater!

A GIRL may be carried away by the ecstasy of her first kiss, but after that she never forgets to wonder if the rouge has been rubbed off her lips.

CONCEIT is stone blind; few men realize when their wives kiss them with extraordinary passion that they have suggested for the moment an old lover.

A CHAIN is as strong as its weakest link. A woman's love is as strong as its weakest moment.

MISS K. L. R.

By P. E. Rogers

MISS K. L. R. has been teaching school for several years. She has become as thin, as straight, as exact, and as sharp-edged as the rulers she keeps in her closet. Miss K. L. R.'s Principal has been noticing that her eyelids are very heavy; that she yawns continually, that she reclines deeply in her chair. Being a virtuous and astute man, he suspects his subordinate of improper conduct and immoral company, which makes her keep late hours. He intends to draw up charges against her. But first he will send his trustworthy assistant, thinner, straighter, more exact, and more sharp-edged than Miss K. L. R., to spy on her.

Miss K. L. R., in truth, does not sleep nights. She prefers to stay at the window chilled and miserable. For as soon as she falls asleep, she dreams, and her dreams are colossal murder-camps. She stabs, chokes, shoots her pupils, her fellow-teachers, her principal, her neighbours. She hunts them across fields, chases them into cellars, up on roofs of houses, among the school-benches, in the closets. Her hands are much more incarnadine than Lady Macbeth's. She wakes up with a terrible scream that startles her next-door neighbour, whose heart is weak. He is certain she will be the death of him.

Some night, as she will be sitting chilly and miserable at the window, she will rise suddenly, open it wide, and jump out.

TO please is the supreme law of life for woman, wherefore a woman adorns herself when young and is pious when old. In youth she strives to please man, in age to please God.

SOME women disturb their husbands' equanimity by asking leading questions. Others use the follow-up system.

THE SECOND BREAKFAST

By Lawrence Reamer

I

HOW did my friendship with the Dyers happen to end? I just passed them on the road. I did not speak to them, nor did either of them speak to me. It is true that I drew my horse aside to let their car pass. A look of recognition fluttered across the woman's face. The man appeared to be concerned only with the wheel and stared frowningly at it. He may not have recognized me. But *she* did; I knew her the minute they came into sight. He must, after all, have known me as well. Of course he did. We all knew one another; and the fact remains that nobody bowed. Three years ago, we would have enjoyed three minutes of happy laughter. Probably I would have turned my horse and followed them home for tea. Now there was only silence and averted glances.

There never was a trace of disagreement; never a cold word passed between us. They had never seemed so cordial as they were at our last meeting, which was at a dinner at their home. They were rather elaborately hospitable that night. They had been growing more so at every rare meeting until they flew away for the winter to put an end to our happy times.

I cannot say that I regretted the indication of finality in our relations. I never followed them up nor asked questions. Were they also satisfied? Was the break brought about by an inevitable fate which did not work its will a minute too soon for all of us?

I'll admit that I have always felt singularly calm about the separation, although I liked Mrs. Dyer. I liked Dyer, too, for that matter, although his wife was more interesting. They seemed to be fond of me, both of them, and we never missed a day of the long summer without meeting or telephoning or impressing ourselves on one another in some way. Yet we just passed on the road and there were no greetings.

"*Jusque le printemps*," she used to say, waving a good-bye when in the golden mid-September they started back to their home some hours further south than our Pennsylvania hill town. They went toward the Blue Ridge, which was faintly visible in the gray mist. Often we did meet before the spring, for I went back to New York in October and they were certain to appear there for a week of the opera and the theatres. They were likely to be with a covey of friends from their own home. Yet at least I carried them off to some Bohemian restaurant for dinner, followed by an invasion of some such esoteric theatrical performance as those in the theatre in Macdougal Street, where we could observe the latest flower of young dramatic genius. It was a very happy time, careless and spontaneous, and it seemed as if our friendship would last, certainly so long as we were thrown together every summer.

Dyer came to live in my quiet Pennsylvania village through some remote ancestral interest. Generations before, one of his forbears had been associated with the little place, which was larger in those days than it is now. He bought an old house; his wife did it over in the style of our prim Quaker

community rather than in the prevailing decorative mode of that spring.

It was not long before they realized that there would be no congeniality with the neighbours, most of whom were simple country people. The others were usually old or ill; many of them were both. So the Dyers, with their two Japanese servants, their motor car and their indefatigable determination to enjoy life whatever the difficulty might be, took to importing their friends. The community liked the couple. They were amiable, cordial young persons, both of them, not in the least complex, sophisticated of course out of all comparison with their neighbours, but well-bred enough to be polite to everybody. So there always were welcoming smiles for them in the spring when they came back, even visits from a few of the important townspeople and then a continuing kindliness in their relations with the community.

"You know you've proved a godsend to us," Ruth Dyer said to me as we sat on the piazza one afternoon waiting for Herbert to come from a search for old furniture on the other side of the mountain. "I don't know what in the world Bert and I should have done up here. You can't keep on bringing people every day to as remote a spot as this. And these dear creatures who live here—you know we could never have relied on them for half an hour's society."

"And to me," I answered as truthfully as I ever had in my life, "to me the Dyer family has been a life-saver. Imagine me at home with my two old aunts with no chance for a change in society short of a trip to Philadelphia. Think of me calling on the postmaster or trying to talk to old Dr. Chrystie or going for a walk with one of the elders —try to conceive of what I would suffer. Then maybe you will be able to arrive at some appreciation of what the Dyers have meant to me."

Herbert did finally arrive with a hideously undecorative and prim specimen of the old furniture that had for years been used on the countryside. After we had properly ridiculed it and abused the antiquarian for his lack of discernment, we went in to dinner. Herbert was a more or less four-cornered man of business, rather short and heavy but muscular and easy in his well-cut clothes. He had ideas beyond the interests which occasionally called him away for several days. Yet he was generally at home until the two started away for a visit to some of the fashionable summer towns.

They were really devoted. She was, probably, as is so often the case, somewhat less overwhelmingly captivated with him. But she cared for him in a degree that ought to have satisfied any husband. He was constantly making love to her. An embrace, a clasp of the hand, a stroke of her soft brown hair that grew back very alluringly from a broad, low brow—these were the invariable results of his nearness to her. She bore them tolerantly, rather smilingly and indicated a satisfied complacence rather than any passionate response. I never saw her touch Herbert, although he ought to have been attractive enough to the average woman.

With other men, she was not inclined to be flirtatious. She would meet the eye sometimes and hold it challengingly while her lips parted in a smile that showed her white teeth invitingly. Occasionally the touch of her elbow, which sent a thrill through any man, was not at once removed. It lingered to impress the feminine softness and loveliness of Ruth on the happy man. A pressure of the hand would sometimes continue until the blood began to shoot more quickly through the veins. Then came separation and there was only Ruth's frank smile to emphasize the fact that she was a most uncommonly lovable and womanly creature — and, moreover, quite aware of it.

During our first summer we went on long motor rides to parts of the country that I had known since childhood.

We sought out farmhouses at which chicken dinners with unhygienic biscuits were served for a consideration. We discovered the deepest spot in the sluggish river to go swimming in on the blazing July days; we spent the long twilights on the tennis court they had built. These were our recreations in the days of our loneliness. When guests came to the Dyers, we did something of the same kind, although we then went about in small hordes that accomplished all our old pleasures with much more noise and hurrah. Then life was more formal and the dinner coat asserted its authority.

"Now that they're gone," Ruth said one Monday afternoon, "we must get over to Crag Rock for the view. I have heard that it is possible on a clear day to see the Washington Monument. After all," she went on, "it isn't half bad being alone, is it? We can manage to have a good time, we three, without the visitors."

Herbert came back then from the railroad station whither he had been escorting the parting guests. There was time for tennis, a late dinner and a smoke until after eleven.

"Come over to-morrow without fail," he shouted after me, "I may want especially to see you."

I had still some work on a picture that had to be finished. I had dawdled enough over it. I wanted every ray of light the next day.

"But maybe it won't be possible," I answered. "You know life can't be all beer and skittles. There's my picture."

Herbert growled something uncomplimentary about the painting.

"You come to-morrow," he said, "picture or no picture. Really, I may want you."

He had more than once during the evening fallen into a mood of mild contemplation as if there might be something on his mind; but he said nothing.

"Do as Bert says," I heard Ruth call with the peculiar clearness that the still night seemed to give to a voice from a short distance. "I don't know what he wants, but I have learned it's best to obey him."

II

THE next day I arose early and added an hour to the first part of the day. I was at my easel a little after sunrise. In that way I meant to afford the luxury of the visit in the late afternoon to the Dyers. I had expected to ride over as usual when word came by telephone from Herbert that he would fetch me at half-past four. He evidently had some reason for making certain of my society that day. He was so determined that he arrived half an hour before the time fixed and sat in the car on the side of the road while I made my preparation to start off with him.

"I've been wondering more or less for the last five minutes," I said as we turned into the road of his house, "how I am going to get home to-night. I am not usually honoured with a trip home in the car. Here I am without my horse. What is the answer? . Do you know?"

"You may not go home to-night," was his unconcerned answer.

"I still refuse to regard that as any sort of an answer. I haven't an idea what you mean. I would never have come away as I am, but might have made some preparations had I believed you."

Herbert looked almost grave for a minute.

"We will run around to the garage," he said, "and I'll give you what you may consent to consider an answer to your question. I would rather talk where we can't be overheard."

Never before had there been such mystery. Never had Herbert seemed so serious. It turned out to be about a matter so trivial that after all I could attribute his solicitude only to his deep affection for Ruth. He had to go that night to Baltimore on business. I was expected to stop at the house, to keep

Ruth from being alone with the men servants.

"I must be in my office in the morning," he went on "since both my partners have inconvenienced themselves to come home for this conference on an important matter. The morning train would get me there altogether too late. By leaving to-night, I can finish my business in time to get the afternoon train and be home to-morrow night."

We went in to dinner. There was curiously enough little conversation. Ruth found a chance to say that she didn't in the least mind being left in the house with the men servants even if they were rather strange and she had never been alone in the house since they had come there. But it was kind of me to consent to occupy one of the guest chambers and after all, it was probably for the best and Herbert was as usual right.

There was little time for talk after dinner. The car carried Herbert to the station and soon after we heard the last departing traces of the express which had stopped on signal for him, the chauffeur turned the car into the grounds. Ruth and I were sitting on the piazza. The talk was desultory. She laughed with an apparent lack of self-consciousness. I was not so much at my ease. Occasional flashes of awkward silence punctuated our talk. The return of the motor furnished her with a pretext to rise.

"Good-night," she said, holding out her hand in the dark. "And pleasant dreams. We breakfast at nine, remember."

I was not likely to forget it. My room was on the first floor. I slept badly. At intervals I suddenly awoke, wondering how I came to be in a strange bed, then gradually remembered what had happened and with the acute consciousness that I must be up for nine o'clock breakfast, slowly went to sleep again. But not for a long stretch. This experience seemed to go on repeating itself indefinitely. I was up at day-break and for two hours walked over the grounds with the dogs. There was still an hour before breakfast when I came back to the house. I had by this time lost all the uneasiness which had interfered with my slumbers. Nor was there a trace of self-consciousness left when I turned to answer Ruth's salutation.

"Going to be a warm day, isn't it?" she said, stepping to the rail of the piazza and casting a knowing eye over the hazy heavens. "What do you propose to do to get through with it? Herbert expected you to stick about the place until he gets back. He ought to be here half an hour before dinner."

It was agreed that I would walk back home, which was a matter of less than two miles across country, after lunch. On her way to the station at five, Ruth would stop for me and together we would meet the returning truant. I would be on horseback, and after dinner return home.

The programme was executed to a considerable extent. I got home in time to put in several hours work on my painting. I heard the motor approaching the house before I had thought of putting down the brush. Ruth had a short time for a detour of the country before she came back to find me ready.

"I got through all sorts of things to-day," she began in a somewhat higher tone than usual, as my horse was not always abreast of the car. "Things I had been wanting to do for the longest time but never seemed able to settle down to. It was like a rainy afternoon when there is no temptation to do anything but one's duty. Didn't you hear the train then?"

I thought I had caught the sound of the shrill whistle which was the first announcement of the train's arrival. Yet we had a minute's wait at the station before the express bound from the large eastern cities rolled rather protestingly in and reluctantly stopped. Only three passengers alighted. Herbert was not among them.

"That's curious," Ruth murmured half to herself. "I'll see if there can be a telegram at the office."

She sprang out of the car and ran down the platform to the tiny room in which the business of the railroad as it affected this village was transacted. But there was no telegram. Ruth turned the car. I followed her. Then we came to the turn in the road a few hundred yards beyond the track. I paused and looked to see in what direction she would proceed.

"Come on," she cried out, speeding the car along the road which led to their home. "You don't intend to leave me now, I hope. I am as much alone as I ever was."

So I followed along as any gentleman would have had to do when a lady gave such decided orders. There was no word, of course, at the house.

"Do you mind—mind much, I mean," said the hostess as she was mounting the stairs to the second floor, "stopping another night? Of course, it is barely possible that Bert may arrive from somewhere by automobile tonight. But I doubt it. The early train in the morning must bring him. Then I must say, I'm a little worried."

I expressed my delight at again being of service to her as Ruth disappeared to dress for dinner. I wandered out to the stable to see that the horse was all right for the night. I noticed that the heat which had seemed unbearable at midday was but little abated at dusk. The haze rising from the ground gave a faint illusion of smoke. The night was sultry. There was, as I turned back to the house, a distant murmur of the low growling thunder. Heat lightning occasionally slit up the deepening twilight. The smoke from my cigarette as I sat on the piazza making these observations of the weather, rose slowly in the heavy air.

"Ugh," said Ruth with a little shudder as she stepped from the house just as a streak of the glowing heat rays lit up the sky, "it's going to storm. Let's go in to dinner."

Again there was a brief interlude of intense self-consciousness as I for a second time took my place at the head of the table. If Ruth, sitting opposite, as she regularly sat opposite her husband in the same chair, experienced any sense of embarrassment she, with a woman's tact, gave no sign of it. After a while my own restraint wore off. I would have liked to sit on the piazza as the storm gathered and talk with my hostess while we smoked a cigarette. But she decided otherwise.

"You won't mind my running away, will you?" she reached out her hand to say good-night. "The day has been busy for me. Don't forget we breakfast at nine."

She disappeared up the steps. I sat and smoked. Presently the storm broke, letting down the rain in hissing streams on the dry earth. A smell of hot vegetation mingled with the odour of the soil. I went to bed and as I fell asleep a short peal of thunder seemed to signal the end of the storm. Further and further away the thunder rolled until there was silence but for the rain dripping from the trees and the rafters. I awoke with the morning sun creeping through the shutters. The storm had done its work gloriously. The sun blazed in the cloudless blue sky. When I reached the dining-room, it was already so near nine that the hostess stood by the table awaiting me.

"So you slept well in the storm," she began smilingly. "Then there is something in the old story that one sleeps best in the rain."

We sat down. She looked buoyant in the fresh morning air. The breeze blew in through the windows, refreshing instead of sultry as it had been the night before.

"Well, I didn't sleep much," Ruth began, "I couldn't get Herbert out of my mind. Where in the world can he be?"

We were silent for a minute. Suddenly there was the noise of a vehicle on the road. It sounded indeed just beyond the piazza. We looked at one another involuntarily. Then there was the sound of Herbert's voice. Neither of us had time to rise from the table before he appeared at the door.

His eye seemed to fall first on me

seated in his place. A most singular expression passed over his face. It was not altogether surprise; nor was it altogether displeasure. I could not help seeing however something of both in that quickly fading look. From me he glanced at Ruth. Already she was looking at Herbert. Curiously enough, there was on her face something of the same mixed expression I had seen on her husband. From Ruth his eyes wandered back to me. I felt sickeningly self-conscious during this amazing pantomime. But try as I might, I could not criticize either the man or the woman. It seemed to me as if the look on his face was rightfully there whether his eyes were turned toward me or toward his wife. Then he suddenly smiled, ran over to Ruth and took her in his arms.

"Any coffee there for me, dearest?" he asked, "I'm famished! I had nothing this morning. My last meal was just before the train left at one o'clock. It was the only one that would get me here this morning early and I was determined that nothing should keep me away a minute longer than necessary."

I had arisen. The place at the head of the table was thus left vacant for its customary occupant. Herbert glanced at the chair.

"Here you are," I said, "this is your chair now. I am no longer needed. You are back to resume your place as the natural protector."

I smiled, but the witticism flashed in the pan. Both Ruth and her husband were within a few seconds talking absorbedly to one another. The event of the trip interested her to the exclusion of every other thought. I had ceased to exist for either of them. While he was busily explaining to her what had happened, I slipped out to the stable. Soon my horse was brought to the door. The meantime, I sat on the piazza and heard fragments of their conversation. It was all about his journey and what she had done to pass the time during his absence.

"Good-bye," I called, "I'm off."

They both came to the window. I caught Herbert's eye which held mine with the old friendly look. The embarrassment or resentment or disapproval with which he had viewed me the minute he entered the dining-room had apparently disappeared. She was frankly indifferent. She waved me a farewell and then turned at once from the window. Herbert called out an invitation to return very soon.

III

But I did not. Then, at the end of a week, the Dyers went away for a fortnight of motoring. Once after they came back, we dined together, but as there was a lively party of visitors, there was no intimacy on that occasion. A week later I was called back to New York. During the winter, they came there as usual. They did not let me know of their presence. Our meeting in an art gallery was for a second awkward. They had just arrived and had meant to telephone me at once, but were no longer sure of the number. Whether the explanation were or were not true, I did not especially care, but I was anxious to appear as I always had. So they accepted my invitation for dinner and the play. There had to be a fourth since a young woman was visiting New York with them. None of us regretted her presence although we would have called her a nuisance in our closer past. As it was, she served very well as one of the quartet, chattering indifferently about the least personal subjects.

I knew well that the end had come. There was no warming up the old friendship. I had read its death sentence in the enigmatical expression in Herbert's eye as he found me at breakfast on that midsummer morning. I had heard its death knell in Ruth's voice when she greeted him after the vague uneasiness had died out of her own expression. I caught the nailing down of the coffin in the intimate wife and husband confidences which began before I was out of the room that day.

The next summer passed to August.

I knew the Dyers were at their house just as well as they must have known that I was as usual painting and riding at my aunt's house. One day we met on the road near my home. Ruth must have turned in to find me since it was a side road little used save by our friends.

"I was going to get you," she called up as I brought my horse to a halt, "for to-morrow night. Won't you dine with us? Just to think it is the first time this year."

Only a woman could have said that as if it were a sudden thought. She knew quite well it was the first time and she knew why.

"Sorry we aren't going to be alone," she said, "but the Willises and some other people are with us."

I accepted. I had determined to recognize no reason why our friendship should end. I was guiltless of any wrong. So, for that matter, were they. At dinner, which was rather more formal than the country summer gatherings, both Herbert and his wife were very polite. There was, of course, a difference to the old mood. Ruth put me at her right. She was never for a minute inattentive. Yet her neighbour on the other side seemed to me to absorb more of her time than was really necessary. Our adieux were most cordial. It may have been that Ruth did not catch my eye when she said good-night so warmly, nor did Herbert grasp my hand for more than a second when he assured me what a pleasure it had been to have me with them again. But to the eye, the Dyers were most cordial.

IV

And when we met to-day, after a year, none of us spoke. I can only ask myself again—how my friendship with the Dyers happened to end?

THE LETTER

By Grace Hazard Conkling

WHEN white Spring clouds go over
And the buds ripen and fill,
I will write you a letter
Using a cuckoo's quill;

And you will read it laughing,
Among excited trees,
Because you understand me
And my small mysteries.

The letter will not tell you
Of any novel thing;
Only how much I love you,
Only that it is Spring.

THE TRUTH AT LAST

By Katherine Donovan

"HE loved me," whispered Dido to Cleopatra, "because of the depth of my tenderness, the lure of my loveliness, the strength of my womanhood. He left me for the bidding of the gods and the mandate of fate."

"He loved me," answered Cleopatra, "for the fire of my beauty, the flash of my passion, the magnificence of my power. He left me for glory, and the call of the imperial city."

"I loved her," confided Æneas to Antony, "for the way her eyebrows quivered when her feelings were hurt. I left her because I could not bear the Carthaginian custom of cooking weasels with every meat course."

"I loved her," answered Antony, "because of a perfume of amber she used in her hair. I left her because she kept nagging me to fondle her Moujik mastiff."

TRYST

By A. Newberry Choyce

SLENDERLY-GIRDLED in a milk-white gown
By grassy meads at moonrising she came
Out from the little dark walls of the town,
Loose hair down-shaken in the sunset flame.

There as I kissed my sweet upon her mouth,
Great golden lilies closed . . . and in the cool
With curving necks two white swans from the south
Folded spent pinions on the stilly pool.

Preened their sprayed plumes each bird with careful bill,
And each proud rite performing took their rest;
Who swam three stately circles and were still
Havened under the willows, breast to breast.

THE WOMAN FROM OVER THE SKY-LINE

By Marjorie Allen Seiffert

I

"JOE HAYNES, what on earth are you doing around the place this time of day? I thought you were going to plough corn in the north lot this morning!"

The woman who spoke was up to her elbows in bread dough. One might have supposed, therefore, that she was absorbed in her own end of the partnership of farming, but her kitchen table was pushed before the east window. From this vantage point she could see the barn-yard, chicken-houses, and even a glimpse of the dusty road, shimmering under the hot July sunshine. Thus she could dominate the livestock and the hired boy. Also her husband if he chanced, as now, to come into view.

The north window of the kitchen was cool, offering a pleasant view of the orchard and Knob Hill rising beyond it, but since that domain was deserted save for bees and an occasional exploring hen, Annie Haynes preferred to knead her dough or beat her batter in the hot glare of the morning sun.

The man gave an uneasy start. His face puckered into apologetic lines, though there was defiance in the depths of his green eyes.

"Well now, Annie," he replied placatingly, "Badger disappointed me about the tractor again. He promises I can have it sure on Friday, but it took longer than he had figured on to finish Sprigg's corn—"

"What were you calculating to do to-day, then?" Annie interrupted, kneading the dough with more than necessary vehemence.

"There's some fixing to do on the hen-house," Joe suggested.

"Let the hen-house wait. The hens won't lay any better if you fix that jig-saw bracket!" called Annie bitingly. "Why don't you go up to the wood-lot and split the fence rails you and Elmer felled last winter? By the time you've harnessed the team I'll have a bite of lunch fixed up for you."

It was true. The hen-house could wait, though it was not a matter of jig-saw ornamentation that Joe had in mind. He was angry that he had forgotten the fence rails, for the back pasture fence must be repaired. But the thought of splitting rails in July was no pleasant one. Joe's eyes were almost black with anger as he silently turned toward the barn.

In half an hour he was well along the road which led around Knob Hill to the piece of woods two miles north where the wood-lot lay.

It was a hot, windless day. The harness jingled pleasantly, and the heavy hoofs of the horses raised golden dust which drifted over the daisies and wild roses growing beside the way. There were no trees to shade the road, which curved slowly upward between rolling fields, and the horses' broad backs grew dark with sweat under the broiling sun.

Joe pushed his hat back upon his forehead and gazed sombrely across the fields of corn. He and Annie had been married six years, and the farm was prospering as never before. His

wife was an executive genius—she got more work out of him than there was spirit in him. He simply hadn't the soul to work so hard, but she was always so admirably in the right that he couldn't oppose her. However, the fact remained that she was a tyrant.

"I'm getting to hate things worse every day," he reflected darkly—"I might as well call myself a slave and be done with it."

The woods road ran along the side of Knob Hill and gave a view of rolling country to the right before it disappeared into the shadow of trees. Joe tied the team to the fence rail, and clambering over, began his task.

Two hours of splitting rails soothed him somewhat. Every blow of the axe was aimed at the black tangle of his life. As the tough wood cracked and splintered beneath the shining edge, little by little the illusion of manhood returned to him. At last, bathed in sweat, he straightened his shoulders and paused to rest. His thin shirt was glued to his muscular body by the violence of his exercise. Standing upright in the dappled shade, he looked splendidly masculine, as Adam, before Eve ordered his ways.

He was about to resume his labour when the sharp bark of a dog behind him on the road caused him to turn. It was a huge mastiff which belonged to a woman, sitting in a covered wagon, drawn by a fat, white horse. She had apparently pulled up while he was still chopping, and watched him in silence. Her dark eyes peered out from the canvas canopy, not flinching from his questioning gaze. She hesitated only a moment, then turning her horse toward the fence, called out in her clear voice: "May I speak to you a moment?"

Joe's first glance told him merely that she was a stranger. Her dark eyes and skin suggested gypsy blood, and the covered wagon was such a one as peddlers use. His second glance undid the orderly sequence of his first impressions, for all at once she smiled, and with the smile seemed no longer a stranger and certainly no peddler-gypsy. He dropped his axe and came slowly forward to the wagon, never taking his eyes from the woman's face. Speech was far from his tongue, and he felt no need to make conversation. And the traveller, still smiling at him gravely, stated her desire.

"May I camp here for a night?" she asked simply. "This is the first woods I've come to since I left Camden."

"The road turns in back a piece the way you came," he answered. "I'll show you!" and seizing the bridle of the horse, Joe turned the vehicle around.

In a few minutes he stopped the wagon and began to let down the bars where a faint trail led into the woods.

"I'll have to go with you a ways and show you," he said. "The road is so grown up you can hardly follow it."

The woman, whose eyes were shining with pleasure, said nothing. Apparently she had the gift of silence, intruding no words upon the mid-day hush of the woods. The trail curved out of sight of the main road, emerging finally into a small, grassy glade. Here Joe turned to the woman in the wagon.

"This is the camping place," he said. "Stay here as long as you like, only be careful with the fire. The spring is over yonder."

The woman looked at him without answering. Again their eyes met, this time for several moments. "It's noon," she said at last. "Won't you stay and have dinner with me?"

She climbed out of the wagon without waiting for a reply, and began to unharness the horse, Joe assisting.

"Where shall I tether him, Mrs. —?" said Joe awkwardly.

"Olive is my name. . . . Under that big elm there. . . . I'll start the fire," and she began picking up bits of brush and snapping in pieces dry limbs suitable for kindling. Joe disappeared to feed his horses and when he returned the fire was going.

Olive glanced up at him. "What beautiful flowers grow here!" she cried, "I wonder what their names are? It's

nice to call things by name, isn't it?" she asked, meaningly.

Joe, catching the banter in her tone, looked up startled, met her eyes, laughed and reddened.

"I'm no flower, Olive," he said, pronouncing it with an effort, "but my name's Joe. If these wild flowers have any claim on your attention," he said, still chuckling, "I'll introduce them. This here one is Spiderwort and that one yonder is Daisy!"

Olive made coffee, fried eggs, bacon and potatoes in the same skillet, and putting the pot at one side to keep hot, brought forth from the wagon two tin plates and cups. Evidently she was prepared for guests.

"I've been on the road now three weeks," she said, "and hardly a day goes by without my having company for dinner or supper—"

"How does it happen you're travelling around like this alone?" asked Joe, when his hunger was partly appeased. "I should think a woman would get scared or lonesome—"

"What's there to be afraid of?" asked Olive. "There's only people. . . . No wild animals in this part of the country. Tolstoy takes good care of me at night," she said, fondling the mastiff's ear, "and day-times I take good care of him. I make him jump up beside me if there are any sheep or loose cows or chickens along the roadside. That keeps him out of temptation's way. As for being lonely," she added, after a moment's pause, "I've been lonelier in the printing office in the city, where I work, than out here in the country. As far as that goes, they say farm life is lonely, too," she added, smiling openly at Joe.

"I'm not lonely," he replied, sombrely, "but I'm sort of desperate. I'd as soon stop right here and now as go along like this till I'm seventy. I've been studying things over to-day. What do I get out of it? What's the *use?*" and his face settled again into the black expression it had worn earlier in the day.

"I think," replied Olive slowly, "that when the time comes that it isn't any fun getting up in the morning, I'll roll over to the wall and go to sleep for good. But I always imagine there's happiness some place else. My father left Russia because he couldn't stand it any longer. Whenever I hate where I am I start out with Tolstoy and a peddler wagon into the country. I take books with me and sell them to farmer women for eggs and milk and bread. I never plan where I'll go nor how long I'll stay. I just get ready for anything that wants to happen. And then it happens. You never heard of a tramp or a peddler committing suicide, did you? It's the people hitched to a job that pushes them faster than they're able to go, or holds them closer than they can bear to stay."

Olive stretched herself in the cool shade, Tolstoy beside her. The only sound to be heard, far or near, was the juicy crunching of grass and leaves between the strong yellow teeth of the fat horse, tethered beneath the elm, and the switching of his ample tail chasing an occasional fly. Joe lit his pipe and looked up through the leaves to the sky. There was silence for a long time.

At last Joe sat up, knocking the ashes out of his pipe.

"Where are you going from here, Olive?" he asked.

She waited before answering him till the air had ceased vibrating with his voice. Then:

"Does it make any difference?" she asked quite gently.

"I'm coming back this evening," he stated in a changed, abrupt tone. "Promise you'll be here."

"I shan't leave till to-morrow morning," Olive replied, getting up and busying herself about the fire.

II

It was nine o'clock that evening before he returned to see her. The woods were so dark that he made his way by instinct rather than sight. Soon a red light flickered through the trees. The

fire was still burning in the camping place. The wagon was pushed about so that the canvas flaps at the rear of it faced the blaze. Olive, with her hand on Tolstoy's head, sat gazing into the fire immovably. When Joe came near she slowly lifted her eyes to his face and with a faint smile said, "Sit down!"

Joe stood above her without answering. After a few moments he began to speak.

"I guess you meant I could come with you, Olive, didn't you?" As the woman gazed into the fire, making no sign, he continued. "I never loved any woman but Annie, and I guess I hate *her* now. She's taken nearly all the manhood out of me, bossing me and trying to turn me into a draft-horse. But there's another way besides love. I could be a sort of mate to you, Olive, if you want me. We could be happy like wild things are happy. But no woman ever again shall order me!"

His heart was beating till it shook his breast. He stood before her in the flickering fire-light, tall and implacable as a forest god. Instinctively Olive rose, asserting her womanhood against his manhood. They swayed together, unwillingly, clasped each other close. Their lips pressed together in a hard kiss. Tolstoy glowered gloomily into the fire. He felt his mistress' consent to this strange situation and did not interfere. But he did not sanction it either, by so much as one thump of his tail.

In a moment they moved apart and seated themselves silently by the fire; Olive spoke first.

"You must face Annie and tell her that you are going away with me. I will not take you on any other condition. You must face her down. If you have courage enough for that she will give you your freedom and there will be no going back. You need make no vows to me, but I will not take you while there is one tie left that holds you to her. When you leave with me you go out into the world, a free man; you don't return to slavery!"

"I can't go back to Annie to-night, Olive," he cried. "I can't see her again. . . . It would be horrible!"

"You must go back, Joe, or you'll never get free. . . . I start to-morrow at daybreak. I'll go the way I was travelling when I met you this morning till I get to the first crossroads. Then I'll let Tolstoy choose the way. I won't wait for you, Joe; if you want to come you must be here by dawn. . . . Now good-night, and perhaps good-bye."

III

She rose, and Joe, feeling that the end had come, rose too, and took a step toward Olive, but with a faint smile she shook her head slowly. "Good-night, Joe," she repeated, and with a tortured expression he echoed "Good-night," turned and was gone.

Olive looked darkly into the fire as though to read the future in its coals, shook her head again, stretched herself and climbed slowly into the wagon. Tolstoy rose, walked heavily after her, turned around several times and curled up at the foot of the wagon steps.

When Joe left the camp and went down the long road toward the farm, his heart was filled with confused desires. Poignant memories of his married life returned to him. Annie, in her high-necked night-gown, her yellow hair in its thick braid, tied with string, blowing out the lamp before following him into bed. Annie in bed, planning the morrow's work. Annie at breakfast, ordering the day. Annie at dinner, questioning how well he had followed her orders.

Though only anger was in his heart toward her, Annie's plump, bright blondness made Olive seem almost sinister in her dark, clear beauty, her beauty of swiftness and fire. What kind of a life would he lead with Olive, he wondered. And like a blank, white wall rose the thought of his coming interview with Annie. She would never let him go. What would happen when Olive was through with him, he wondered, skipping the problem of the immediate future. He remembered a day when as a boy he had run away from

school. But he recalled also how, after the first hour, the day was heavy with the weight of the reckoning to come. He could not even now conceive of a freedom with no penalty attached.

By this time he had come in sight of the farmhouse, lying quietly in the starlight. The kitchen windows were yellow squares to the night. He stole softly around to the orchard window and looked in. Although it was nearly eleven, Annie was still up. The loaves of fresh bread lay on the kitchen table, partly covered by a clean dish-towel. It seemed incredible that Annie was kneading that very bread but a few hours ago, that since then Olive had come into his life to change it so utterly, before the loaves were cold. As he watched, Annie, who had been moving briskly about the kitchen, glanced at the clock, and as though reaching some decision, took a sharp bread-knife from the drawer. She cut several slices from one of the loaves, spread them with butter and "new plum jell" and laid them on a plate for him by the sink. Then she turned the lamp down and went upstairs.

Joe thought of the supper he had eaten in sullen silence, Olive flickering like a will-o'-the-wisp through his brain, while Annie plied him with questions about the fence rails, the chicken-house and ploughing the north lot. He remembered that he wanted another helping of fried mush but was too angry to break silence and ask for it. So Annie had noticed, after all, that he had eaten less than usual, but would not humour his bad temper by urging him to eat.

Her understanding of him seemed to close about him like the meshes of a net. If he ran away with Olive she would know it was to spite herself, and not for love of another woman. He eyed the bread and jelly hungrily. He could never go away. He thought of deceiving Olive with the statement that he had seen Annie and she had sent him to her. But it was impossible. He could not even conceive what Annie would have said. He could think of no likely story to tell. He knew, as one foredoomed, that even if he could summon courage to go to Annie as she lay, blonde and blameless in her bed, and ask for his freedom, she would never let him go. She would remind him that she could not farm the place alone.

But if he could deceive Olive and steal away with her at dawn he would never forget Annie, waiting with indefatigable patience. She would expect him every day till the very force of her expectations would bring him home. Fancifully he imagined the plate of bread and jelly set for him every night. If she found it untouched in the morning she would placidly eat it with her breakfast, and spread fresh bread for him the coming night. Just to spite her, he would eat the bread now and leave immediately after.

He gently opened the kitchen door. The cat came to meet him, with a loud purr. He ate the bread and jelly eagerly. Underneath the last piece was a note. "Be up early to-morrow. Badger stopped in to say he'd be here with the tractor."

Blackly his anger surged again. He left the house, stumbling through the yard, blindly. He was trembling all over. He threw himself on the long, dew-wet grass by the roadside to collect his thoughts and sharpen his will. He would join Olive as she drove by at dawn. He would silently climb up beside her. What did he care if he met Badger with the tractor. He was a free man, no one could order his ways. He would tell Olive he had seen Annie. But what could he say she had said? He had no conception what Annie might do if he had the courage to tell her. He was unable to imagine what she would say. He could never convince Olive that he had won his freedom. No, he must go back and face Annie first. Annie, monumental in her white nightgown, her singleness of purpose. No, he could not do it. He did not know all of Annie's weapons, and he felt sure she had one to vanquish him even in rebellious desperation. He could not go.

He lay there for hours in the damp

grass, face down. At last a cock crew, and myriad sleepy chirpings in the bushes announced dawn. The tumult in Joe's brain was hideous, his heart beat deafeningly, when far up the road he heard the sound of horse's hoofs, accompanied by the slight jingle of harness. It came nearer. Immobile, Joe lay beneath a lilac bush like a dead body by the roadside.

At last the wagon was very near. Another lighter sound came to his ears. Something moved and rustled in the grass. It must be Olive, come to take him with her! He grew faint with excitement. But it was a cold nose that sniffed at his ear and his hand. Joe nearly screamed aloud. Tolstoy, satisfied, turned away to the wagon which now came opposite, wagging his tail and looking up into Olive's face for some sign of approval. But Olive, who had not moved from the wagon seat, gazed enigmatically forward toward the Eastern sky, pink with clouds. Joe, who cringed and held his breath waiting for her to speak, waited in vain. The wagon passed by without stopping, the slow beat of horse's hoofs, the faint jingle of harness dying away down the road.

Annie came down to the kitchen, a worried frown between her brows. She picked up the empty plate where the bread had lain, and smiled. Still smiling, she blew out the lamp and started the breakfast fire in the kitchen stove.

FANTASY ON A THEME BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

By Ralph B. Cooney

HE was a perfect Roman soldier. His armour was polished to a state of mirror-like perfection. His helmet glittered as he turned his head. His spear, and short naked sword, both looked dangerously serviceable. From beneath the skirt of his tunic, his bare, muscular legs gave every evidence of sturdiness and power.

Especially where, below each knee, there yet remained the impression of his elastic garters.

THE trouble with a woman is that she can't be introduced to a man without wondering how her first name will sound with his last one.

PESSIMIST: One who looks the world straight in the eye.

THE HEEL OF ACHILLES

By Ford Douglas

I

THERE was a loud burst of applause when Leffingwell sat down. For an amateur he had performed exceedingly well with a song and a story, and the hand-clapping, shouting and napkin-waving that followed would have warmed even the callous heart of a professional entertainer. Preceding him there had been the usual after-dinner oratory, not as irritating as mustard gas though rather more deadly, and the diners at Charley Lee's birthday party had begun to show signs of asphyxiation. Then it was that the new member, Leffingwell, galvanized them back into life. It was his first appearance among us, a sort of introduction as it were, and he made the hit of the evening.

Leffingwell was a good-looking fellow. He was about thirty, one would judge, tall, and built along the athletic lines of a college oarsman. But he had a greater gift than his looks—his voice. It was a deep bass, a saxophone voice of great power and volume, and one that compelled instant attention anywhere. And, to crown all, Leffingwell had been a captain in the Flying Corps with two years of service on the Western Front!

All this Gus Shuck took in with a sinking heart. He had heard much of Captain Leffingwell, in a certain quarter, and he had hoped against hope that the newcomer was overbilled. But now, having had a good look at the stranger and having watched him perform, he glumly realized that his rival was up to specifications and with a liberal margin to the good.

"I guess it's all up with me with Alice," he said, turning to his friend, Dr. Clark. "This fellow's got everything! He—he outshines me."

"He does," agreed the doctor heartily. "He outshines you like a comet outshines a tallow candle."

Shuck winced. He had hoped for encouragement—for, perhaps, a little argument as to his comparative merit, but the doctor seemed as completely won as the rest of them.

"He looks like the real thing," ventured Shuck timidly. "I think he's got me outclassed—don't you?"

"I do—I certainly do," answered Clark with enthusiasm. "You stack up against him like a glass of synthetic beer compares with a stein of Pilsener."

A tear rolled down the unhappy Shuck's face and, seeing this, the doctor laid a consoling hand on his shoulder.

"But don't give up, my boy. Never say die! Who can tell how it's going to come out in the end?"

"He's got everything," wailed Shuck. "And a lot of parlour tricks. He's too damned good!"

"Your last remark may be true," said Clark, after a moment's reflection. "Now listen, son. I've been a member of this club a good many years. I've seen 'em come and go. I've seen 'em make good, and I've seen 'em blow up like toy balloons. The thing that occurs to me right now is that the flashy ones don't last. Though I will say," he added, "the captain don't look, or act, like a four-flush. On the contrary he appears to me to be a regular fellow—but, as I say, who can tell what'll develop?"

"Why, he's got me outclassed even in names," went on the lover despairingly. "What girl would look at a Gus Shuck when there's a Roger T. Leffingwell around? I've tried trimming mine up a bit, but it wouldn't work. Alice asked me to make it A. Aurelius Shuck, but when I sprung it on the gang they gave me the laugh—they called me 'the Emperor' and 'the old Roman,' and a lot of other things."

"I think what you need is a drink," observed the doctor, after a critical inspection. "You're too sober!"

He pulled from his hip pocket a flask and, holding Shuck's glass below the edge of the table, poured a generous five fingers of high-power rye, and an instant later it was searing Shuck's stomach like so much boiling oil.

"The home-made they are serving to-night don't seem to have any kick in it," continued Clark, watching his companion choke with obvious pleasure. "They've got to do better or I'm off these birthday parties."

"I wouldn't have come," gasped Shuck, "only I heard that this fellow Leffingwell was to be here, and I wanted to get a look at him."

"Well, you've had your look but it don't seem to have agreed with you," commented the doctor, grinning. "Now, for God's sake brace up and be a man. Here"—he poured another slug from his bottle—"one more won't hurt you."

A self-appointed toastmaster had got down to the ragtags and bobtails, the very dregs of the talent present. The host of the occasion, Charley Lee, had been called on and had endeavoured to entertain them with an account of his first birthday party. It was years ago, it appeared, and very sad, and, overcome with emotion, Mr. Lee choked up somewhere about the middle of the tale and sat down in a lather of tears.

"We will now hear from one of the best speakers of the evening," announced the toastmaster, rapping the table with a spoon to quiet the fictitious applause following Mr. Lee's effort. "This gentleman you have all known for a long time. He is the man who"—he floundered for an idea to complete his sentence—"he is the man who"—he paused again—"well, anyhow, he'll say something. Gentlemen, I take great pleasure in introducing Mr. August Shuck."

The doctor's rye had scored heavily and Gus Shuck heard his name called as if from a great distance. A sharp pressure of the doctor's knee roused him from his trance and, greatly bewildered, he looked up into a score of expectant faces. It was like a dream—a nightmare. The lights dazzled and befuddled him. A year seemed to pass—a year of hand-clapping and cries of "Shuck! Shuck! Shuck!" Then he felt a violent dig in his ribs and heard the doctor whisper:

"Now's your chance. Put it all over the army man!"

He rose slowly, much embarrassed, and with not an idea or a thought in his head.

"Well, gentlemen," he began, "I am—er—greatly pleased to be with you here this evening, and—er—"

"Tell the story about the nigger woman," hissed Clark, "or the one about the two Irishmen."

Nothing could have been more unfortunate. For the doctor, in his earnest endeavour to be of assistance, hopelessly confused the two anecdotes in Shuck's none too clear brain, and disaster followed.

"Quite so," said Shuck. "I'll entertain you with a most humorous story of a coloured woman down in Mississippi and a mule from—well, it doesn't matter where the mule was from."

He started bravely enough but mired quickly. Then he went back and revamped his facts, missing the one on which hung the point of the story, and it was about this time that the plot of the other anecdote entered his mind and he finished the darkey tale in Irish dialect and sat down amid roars of laughter.

"How'd it go, Doc?" he asked, highly elated.

"Great!" shrieked Clark, holding his sides. "You'll never hear the last of it."

By dint now of much signalling, the Hon. Horatio P. Badger was enabled to attract the attention of the toastmaster and by means of a great deal of winking and nodding managed to be called upon for his usual extemporaneous address.

Badger, a ponderous, moon-faced man, was, by some miracle of modern business, a high functionary in any insurance company. All his life he had lived in a swamp of rates, commissions, profits, losses—and, most of all, sweet-scented and rose-tinted addresses to his various agents.

There were mutinous murmurs as he rose, for his audience had suffered on numerous occasions the ordeal of his banality. His speech that followed might have been cribbed from any Third Reader, and was a sort of gooey goulash of noble thoughts and high ideals to which he gave his personal endorsement and also that of his company.

Judge Hawper mopped his brow.

"How did that old fool horn in here?" he demanded in a hoarse whisper. "He'll be boosting his sanctified insurance till daylight if we don't stop him. You'd think the twelve apostles were on his board of directors!"

Though no one paid the slightest attention to Mr. Badger, he drooled on and on, banging the table at times to drive home a platitude.

The judge became desperate.

"My God, something has got to be done!" he gasped, looking about for some instrument of deliverance. His gaze finally rested on the unsuspecting Leffingwell and instantly he was on his feet.

"I am creditably informed," he shouted, drowning out the insurance magnate, "that we have with us this evening a recitationist of great talent, and—"

"—and," continued Badger, raising his voice and glowering at Hawper, "it is my constant aim and desire that the integrity of my personal conduct shall be on the same high plane as the great underwriting corporation of which I have the honour to be—"

"To perdition with your insurance company!" shouted Hawper. "What do you think this is—a meeting of general agents?"

He turned to the others. "Gentlemen, I am happy to announce that Captain Leffingwell will now give us '*Gunga Din.*'"

There was instant applause.

"'*Gunga Din!*' '*Gunga Ding!*' '*Gunga Dung!*'" *they yelled.* "*Give us* '*Gonga Dong!*'"

"Really now, fellows," protested the astonished and embarrassed Leffingwell, "that's too old. It's a chestnut! And—"

"Go ahead!" came from all parts of the room. "You're all right!"

Mr. Badger paused for a moment for the tumult to quiet.

"And—" he began.

"Sit down!" they shouted, and resumed once more their shouts of "Leffingwell! Leffingwell! Leffingwell!"

It was a new experience for Captain Leffingwell. He smiled tolerantly at the demonstration, knowing full well the reason for it, and then as there promised to be no cessation, rose slowly to his feet.

"All right, gentlemen," he said, "if you insist, then here goes. Be your blood upon your own heads."

He recited it well, the rich note and the dramatic quality of his voice and gestures thrilling them all, and at the conclusion there were loud cheers and insistent calls for more. He complied, after some hesitation, with "*Mandalay*"; and then, with a proper show of modesty and only after great and prolonged urging, he finished with "*Danny Deever.*"

Tears streamed down the face of the wretched Mr. Shuck. He was the victim of mingled emotions, touched as he was by the pathos of the poem and wrenched by another and vastly more powerful and personal heart-ache, both of which being considerably accentuated by the doctor's pint.

"It's no use, Doc," he moaned. "That fellow's got it all over me from soda to

hock. I'm a gone gosling. The singing bird-man wins in a walk, and Alice—"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Clark. "You make me sick! You're yellow!—a quitter!—a dub! You ought to lose!"

It was midnight and, the liquor being exhausted, the party broke up. Mr. Shuck and Dr. Clark left the club together, the former leaning heavily upon his friend's arm, and the last thing he saw was a group around the triumphant Leffingwell singing something to the effect that he was a jolly good fellow and, moreover, that such was a fact that no one could deny.

II

A LONG, dismal week followed the birthday party. On Wednesday, when the infatuated Shuck called up over the telephone to arrange for his usual call, Miss Alice told him she had another engagement. And on Sunday evening when, following his custom of years, he dropped around at about seven, a rich bass voice rumbled down the speaking tube into the cold vestibule of the apartment house with the statement that she was "out."

Shuck recognized the voice. It was bitterly familiar to him and for a moment he felt impelled to shout back: "You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din." He almost did this. A more courageous man would not have hesitated, but ten years of paying court to Miss Alice had taken the spine out of August Shuck. He had become a lackey—a mere fetcher and carrier at the maiden's beck and call. Yet this had not been always so. For Shuck had played football in his college days, and later in life had whipped a hack-driver.

At noon the next day—blue Monday—Shuck wandered forlornly into the club. Two things had directed his footsteps: the first being force of habit, and the second was, though he would not have admitted it even to himself, that he was looking for sympathy. Therefore, he was gratefully surprised when the doorman told him that Dr. Clark was waiting for him in the library.

"Hello, Doc," he said, sinking into a chair beside him. "Well, my cake's all dough. I told you it would be. Leffingwell's horned in on both my nights, Wednesday and Sunday, and it's all over but the wedding."

He sighed in a dismal fashion and then attempted to whistle, but there was no melody in his notes and the air died away relapsing him into silence.

The doctor, evidently with something on his mind, gazed at his friend with ill-concealed impatience.

"You certainly are a dub, if there ever was one," he began. "A mere worm. You're past help. If you weren't such a jellyfish I might be able to help you, but as it is—" he gestured contemptuously—"what's the use?"

"But could you help me, Doc? Would you help me," he pleaded, "if I put my case in your hands and do everything you say?"

"Now you're talking," said Clark. "If you promise to do that, and if you go through without weakening, I think there's a chance. For *I've found out something about Leffingwell!*"

"Oh!" exclaimed Shuck, brightening and half rising from his chair. "You've found out that he's a deserter—or something—from the army. Or an embezzler—or a bigamist—"

"Hell, no!" roared the doctor. "Nothing like that. He's a devil of a fine fellow, and don't you forget it."

Shuck sank back into his chair.

"I thought you said you had found out something about him," he whined. "But you're only boosting him."

"I have discovered his weakness," said Clark. "And if you take advantage of it you may win Alice back. Now, listen, nut: *Leffingwell is a spot-walker!*"

"A spot-walker?"

"Exactly. He walks on spots. And more than that, he's a lamp-post kicker!"

"You're too deep for me, Doc. I don't get you."

"He is afflicted with a peculiar form

of nervousness," explained the doctor, "that compels him to kick lamp-posts, and on a sidewalk where the stones or tiles are in alternate colours he will tread only on the dark ones or the light ones, depending on his particular freak of mind."

"Why, the man must be crazy!" exclaimed Shuck, hopefully

"Not at all. His affliction is not uncommon. A good many prominent and successful men have it. I could tell you of a half-dozen of your friends who do funny little things like that. It passes away in time."

The lover rose from his seat.

"I'll call Alice up right away and tell her about it," he said.

"Sit down!" roared Clark. "You'll do nothing of the kind, nut! She'd think you the crazy one—and besides she wouldn't believe it."

"But I don't want her running around with a brute like that," objected Shuck, reluctantly sitting down again. "He might throw a fit—or something."

"Fiddlesticks!" snapped the doctor contemptuously. "The captain is a damn fine fellow and you'll be mighty lucky if it isn't yourself that throws the fit."

"But, Doc, he might be dangerous—"

"Listen to me, you simp," interrupted Clark. "It's only an idiosyncrasy. Lots of men have them. One of the best friends I ever had had a slight affliction of that kind. It was counting vest buttons."

"Counting vest buttons?" queried Shuck, looking hard at his friend and moving his chair slightly back. "What do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say. Johnson always counted the buttons on a man's vest. He had to do this first before he could centre his mind on anything else. Five buttons, he told me, is the regular number. Four buttons or six buttons were unusual and rather disturbing. Three buttons or seven buttons made him thoughtful for an hour or more, and any greater or less number than these put him out for the day.

"One afternoon he ran across a fellow on a street car—a Russian, I think he was, or maybe he was an Austrian—anyhow, this fellow had a vest on that was just covered with buttons—rows of 'em. Johnson counted them carefully—twenty-six. To make sure he adds them up again and they come out twenty-nine. It was a pretty serious thing for Johnson and he goes over them once more, and it made him tremble when he totals them at thirty-one.

"The Russian gets off the car, and so does Johnson. He stops the fellow and tries to talk to him, all the time counting buttons, and the Russian, who was an anarchist or something, breaks away and starts to run. Johnson hot-foots after him. Then a lot of people take up the chase, a regular mob, across lots and alleys. The police join in and finally they were both arrested and the fellow with the buttons accused Johnson of drawing a revolver on him, and I had a terrible lot of trouble getting him out of jail."

"Well, what's all that got to do with me?" demanded Shuck petulantly. "You say that Leffingwell only walks on spots. What do you want me to do—lay out a checkerboard track and run him a foot race?"

"No, not that," said Clark hotly, "for he'd beat you. You'd probably quit at the quarter pole."

"Well, what *am* I to do? What's the plot?"

"I've thought it all out and it's this," said Clark, drawing his chair closer. "Now listen well. I've learned through my sister that your rival is going to take Miss Alice to a show on Wednesday evening. After that they are to meet another couple for a little supper in the marble room of the old Metropole. To get into that, as you know, one must walk down the long corridor from the office, and this is floored with big marble squares of white and black—and near the end *two of the black squares are missing!*"

"I suppose he will turn back and go home when he sees that," said Shuck sarcastically. "Then I'm to gallop in on horseback and carry the girl away."

"Gus, you've got about as much imagination as an oyster. I'm not going to tell you anything more. You wouldn't understand it, so you'll just have to leave it to me. All I ask you to do is to be there."

"Oh, I'll be on hand," gloomily promised Shuck. "But I don't see what good it will do."

"I suppose that's as much as I could expect of you," retorted the doctor, rising. "Now, don't forget—the Metropole Wednesday evening after the show."

III

THE medley of popular jingles that came most agreeably to the ears of Miss Alice Bradley as she entered the lobby of the Metropole seemed but a continuation of the musical comedy that she had just left behind. Indeed, the big orchestra in the hotel dining-room was playing parts of it, interposing now and then airs from other "Broadway hits." The evening had passed most pleasurably and Miss Bradley, as is the invariable custom of all women with military escorts, clung to the captain's arm. Leffingwell, in uniform at her request, had all the dignity and commanding presence of the veteran officer that he was, and Alice was not unconscious of the many eyes directed their way.

She was a proud woman, as she had the right to be. For the Bradleys were of a proud and distinguished family. Three generations of Bradleys had sat in the state legislature, and Mr. Jonas H. Bradley, Alice's father, had been addressed as "Colonel" ever since he was nineteen years old, having inherited the title from his father before him. They were rich, keeping two cars, the smaller of which, however, they rarely mentioned; and they also had a butler. And to all this glamour Alice herself had added prestige, for she had, after no little letter-writing and affidavit-making, become a member of both the Colonial Dames and the Daughters of the Revolution.

Near the desk Alice nodded haughtily to Dr. Clark. Ordinarily she would not have seen the doctor, for Clark was a bachelor suffering the inconvenience of being considered "wild," but to-night she had her captain with her and accordingly was in a more gracious mood.

Dr. Clark smiled back warmly. He had been expecting her, but she did not know it, and had been busy for the past hour making certain arrangements. He posted the wondering Shuck in the drugstore at the far end of the corridor, with strict instructions to appear only after two blasts of a whistle. Then he chartered a couple of grinning urchins from the telegraph desk in the lobby, supplied them with whistles, and drilled them in blowing the same upon the happening of a certain event. Then, like a good general, he waited.

As Captain Leffingwell approached the long corridor leading to the dining-room, he became dimly conscious of the checkerboard arrangement of the tiles. They were huge squares of black and white marble laid in a diagonal fashion, an annoying thing, for the true "spot-walker" dislikes the angular pattern.

Automatically, however, adjusting his mind to the situation, the captain manœuvred the unsuspecting Miss Bradley so that he stood for an instant on the exact centre of the first black tile in the middle row. His practised eye gazed ahead at the long vista, and then, with a tightening of his elbow upon his companion's arm, he strode forward.

Miss Bradley, with proper regard for the current fashions, wore a narrow skirt. It limited her stride to a matter of inches, and this, and the fact that the orchestra was playing a march, spelled disaster.

At first she thought that Leffingwell was perpetrating some boorish joke. He seemed to be goose-stepping. With stern and set features he was making gargantuan strides from black tile to black tile, and in her efforts to keep pace with him she waddled ridiculously. Hot anger crimsoned her cheeks and she endeavoured to free herself. But her efforts were of no avail for the

captain's powerful arm clamped her to his side, and in this amazing fashion they made their way through the crowd. It made way for them, its titters changing to laughter, and there were shouts of "They're off!" by the sporting gentry, followed by the announcement that "They're neck and neck at the quarter!"

Now it so happened, unfortunately, that the hotel was harbouring a convention of furniture manufacturers. There were displays everywhere and, more unfortunate still, a maker of floor lamps had seized upon the corridor as a show space for his wares. At intervals along the wall stood lamps of various kinds—piano-lamps, tall reading-lamps, hall-lamps—all with the same feature of a large floor base and a long pedestal. The first of these in line was a novelty to the trade, being fashioned like an ordinary street lamp, though smaller.

Certain mental processes become fixed, psychologists tell us, requiring no cerebric effort whatever, as, for example, the unconscious ease with which a pianist strikes his keys or an autoist shifts a gear. In this manner the captain disengaged his arm when fairly abreast of the ornamental lamp-post and, side-stepping with the rhythm of the music, approached and gave it a smart kick. Then before his now thoroughly enraged guest could protest, he had her again by the arm and strode onward.

Thrice more he repeated this and each time a roar of laughter fell on the reddened ears of Miss Bradley. Near the dining-room entrance Leffingwell hesitated. He saw with sudden amazement that two of the black tiles were missing, and for the moment this unaccountable phenomenon dominated his mind.

It was a span of twelve feet that marred the geometric design, but Leffingwell made it in one flying leap. At the same time there were piercing blasts from two siren-like whistles, and Gus Shuck appeared from the drug-store entrance just as the captain fell sprawling on the floor.

"*August!*" called Miss Bradley, trembling with rage and mortification. "Take me home at once."

Leffingham scrambled to his feet stuttering apologies, but the maddened maiden would hear none of them.

"To think, sir, that I, a Bradley, should suffer such a humiliation! I think you have been drinking, sir, and this is the last I ever want to see of you."

And with that she seized the secretly exultant Shuck and steered him hastily out into the night.

For a time the dazed and astonished Leffingwell stood reviewing the unhappy chain of events that had brought on the calamity, and then he heard a hail and, looking up, saw Dr. Clark.

"Well, well! How is the captain?" inquired Clark, proffering a Judas hand. "I was just hoping that I might run across you, because," he drew closer and lowered his voice, "because I'm feelin' mighty lonesome, and I've got a little something on my hip. How'd it do to slip down to the club and have a drink?"

"My dear doctor," boomed Leffingwell, slapping him on the back, "you've saved my life! I never needed a drink more than I need one at this moment."

They walked out arm in arm, and by midnight they were both fairly drunk, and the captain was reciting "*Gunga Din.*"

A BRAND FROM THE BURNING

By George Sinberg

THE most interesting moment of the Christian Science Wednesday night meeting had arrived. The First Reader called for testimonies of personal benefits derived from the Science. The congregation sat in expectant silence.

After a few minutes, a young girl arose and told how she had successfully invoked the power of the divine love to dissipate the error of a sore finger. Then a frail, white-haired little woman arose and in a piping voice told how she had been cured of the mortal delusion of gall-stones eight times. Another lady now narrated how she had induced one of her servants to read *Science and Health* in Swedish, with the result that the girl had been relieved of rheumatism, lockjaw, and buzzing in the ears. After that a short, paunchy gentleman, who quivered on his cane as he spoke, thanked Science for saving him from women.

But only the visitors were impressed by these testimonies. The regular members, who had been hearing them every Wednesday night for three years, were bored. They wanted to hear something new. As nothing new seemed forthcoming, the meeting relapsed into a hopeless silence.

Suddenly a man who had been drowsing in a rear pew awoke and startled everyone by beginning to sing loudly. He had a long, plaintive face, meek eyes, and a timid moustache. He was apparently under the impression that a hymn had been called for. Realizing his error after one or two measures, he saved an embarrassing situation by pretending that his hymn was merely preliminary to his testimony.

"Hosannah!" he cried. "I want to add my mite to the eloquent accounts we have heard of the power of the truth to heal. Ever since I was a small boy, I suffered from a terrible disease that I inherited from my parents. On account of it I grew up sickly and timid; I was afraid to show my face among happy people. My illness made me feel my unworthiness to walk God's fair green earth. It filled my nights with horrible dreams, in which I was tortured by the devil."

He paused to wipe his brow. His audience drew a tense breath. This promised to be hot stuff

"Then Science found me. I read *Science and Health.* I took in all its lessons at one gob. In exactly three weeks I was a new man I am happy for the first time in my life. I go to the theatres and to card-parties. I visit the race-track and meet my friends at games of chance. I drink whenever I feel like it—and whatever I can get from the bootleggers. For the first time in my life I am not afraid to look at the girls.

"I thank God for Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science. *They have cured me of my old belief in Methodism.*"

As he hastily turned to leave, he was seized by three husky Scientists and pitched through a stained-glass window.

BALOCHARD

By E. G. Perrier

MON ami Balochard vient de prendre une énergique détermination: il se présente aux élections législatives prochaines.

Il se présente, Balochard, d'abord pour épater le voisor. Bignol apothicaire, et le petit Ratibois, candidats, invétérés, qui, depuis l'élection du député Boche, font des mamours indistinctement au curé, à l'instituteur et au sousprefet.

Il se présente aussi parce que Boche, ce fameux Boche dont on parle tant, qui, pendant sa dernière campagne, se faisait fort de décrocher la lune, n'a rien décroché du tout, si ce n'est quinze mille livres de rentes pour lui, et, pour sa fille, un mari blasonné.

Vraiment, se moque-t-il assez des électeurs, ce Boche!

Dans son gilet, depuis tantôt douze ans qu'il siège au Parlement, Balochard pleure comme une Madeleine: *Mon cher Député!* par ci; *Mon cher Député!* par là. Mais ouitche! Peine perdue. . . . Monsieur Boche n'entend pas: Monsieur Boche est affligé d'une sudité implacable!

Pourtant, que demande-t-il, Balochard? Est-ce un bureau de tabacs, une perception, une de ces mille et une bagatelles auxquelles tout citoyen bien pensant se fait un devoir de prétendre? Non! Pas même une insignifiante sinécure! Sa modestie est inouïe. Il n'a qu'un rêve, un tout petit rêve, un rêve de rien du tout; *avoir les palmes!*

Ah! si on avait voulu lui donner les palmes!

Dire pue maintenant, au lieu d'être Balochard tout court, il serait "Monsieur Balochard," celui qu'on respecte, auquel les femmes font des sourires, et qu'il pourrait se rengorger, en passant dans les rues, comme cette canaille de Ratibois, que les gens saluent très bas depuis qu'il est décoré, et qui se croit le droit, à cause de sa boutonnière en fleur, de parler toujours plus fort que les autres!

Ah! oui, canaille, le Ratibois! Et le Boche donc! Et tout le monde! Il n'y a qu'un homme intègre: lui, Balochard.

Ah! Balochard! Si on le connaissait! Si on voulait le connaître! . . . Mais patience. . . . Ce n'est past sur son compte, qu'on pourrait faire des ragots comme on en fait, par exemple, sur le compte de ce pauvre Bignol, dont la femme, de l'avis de tous, est une cocotte. D'abord, il est célibataire, Balochard. Et puis, il a des principes: il ne triche jamais au jeu qu'avec les imbéciles, et, s'il se saoûle, c'est seulement une fois par an, le jour du 14 juillet. Enfin, qu'il devienne un jour député: on verra si c'est lui qui sera égoïste, mauvais, et s'il refusera les palmes à un ami! . . . Allons donc! il a le cœur autrement placé que le Boche. . . . On devrait savoir ça. On devrait l'estimer. Vive Balochard!

Quand il songe ainsi aux qualités qu'il a, Balochard se sent tout attendri.

Et déjà, il s'imagine les murs de la circonscription couverts d'affiches multicolores, avec ces mots en lettres d'une aune: "Balochard, candidat!" et il se figur l'enthousiasme des électeurs, d'avoir un homme comme lui

pour les représenter, et il voit la tête de Boche, atteré devant une pareille rivalité, et la figure bilieuse du petit Ratibois qui se remue et gueule comme s'il avait le feu au derrière!

Et ma foi, il n'y tient plus—le tableau est trop amusant!—il se tape sur les cuisses à grands coups de poing, et il se tord de rire, et c'est tout juste s'il lui reste assez de souffle pour murmurer, d'une voix qui hoquette et qui s'étrangle:

—". . . Tout de même! . . . C'est-y bien joué! . . ."

DUST REMEMBERING

By Maxwell Anderson

LEAVES fell into the path untroubled
And woodmice came and went in the night,
Rains fell, it was long between winter and winter,
And the days built years out of dark and bright.

Not a step where the vines have tangled;
The mound is eaten away with snows;
If the voice could lift there would be no answer
While blackberries come and the summer goes.

Woman dear, have you still remembered?
It is long, it is late; the life runs cold
In the hollow earth where your step would echo
Should you come hungering now as of old.

Leaves fall into the path in autumn
And woodmice race through the trembling spring . . .
It was long ago; it is well forgotten;
Oh, forgive me, dead, for remembering.

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ABOUT TOWN, FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS

By Madame X

Although it is rumoured that long, full skirts are shortly to succeed the ultra-short, narrow ones, I can't believe it. I do not love a skirt which ends at the knee, and I do like a walking skirt to end at the ankle. But not a *full* walking skirt. That certainly makes a difference. But when the times comes I feel sure that no woman will jeopardize her reputation for smartness by wearing a skirt which swishes and swells about her ankles in its puritanical width of anything from three to four yards. Everything will come out all right, and the skirt of the future will be a long, narrow one. You see if it is not so. A woman looks the incarnation of grace in the latter style, and once one or two of them have found their way to Bond Street it will be "good-bye" to the short horrors which we have all been wearing lately—most of us, alas! unwisely.

I have seen Mdlle. Delysia in both styles—the long and the short. The former she wore swathed about her and falling to her feet at one of the Albert Hall balls. She looked simply beautiful! Like a blonde Madam Recamier, particularly as the whole toilette was carried out in ivory figured chiffon velvet, giving a wonderful effect of simplicity. She wore her hair "slicked" back, as our Transatlantic cousins say, with a white face relieved only by lavender-tinted eyelids. Really, the effect was startling in its loveliness. The limelight was playing upon her box much more than it played upon the dancers. And you should have seen the Tango-lizards gazing at her—I am poaching upon the preserves of Madame Desti in using that priceless expression. Tango-lizards are the sleek-haired, small-waisted gentlemen, you know, of the professional dancing world, who are doing so well at all the casinos in the South of France at present by accepting tips from partnerless ladies after being chosen by them as dancing partners for the evening. One has to live, of course—and dance!

I saw a girl at Ciro's recently, dancing in turquoise satin slippers with black diamond-studded heels—awfully pretty. There is more imagination in that design for evening shoes than almost any that I can remember. It gives a twinkling, fairy-like quality to the feet of the dancer. I enquired at a little esoteric establishment in Knightsbridge where one could purchase these shoes, and learned that heels are a thing apart, bought alone like buckles, and fixed to the shade of shoe required afterwards.

Speaking of Ciro's, I overheard rather an amusing *bon mot* the other night. A lady was deploring — or lauding, perhaps—the informality of dance invitations. "Seems to me," she said, "that it is a case of 'bring your own lady and use our floor.'"

I am pleased that silver dresses have sung their swan song. Lovely, of course, for ladies of uncertain—or is it certain?—age. Gives them distinction and an appearance of opulence. But it was hard luck on the ingénues to have to look five or ten years older simply because silver tissue was *de rigeur*. It must have been rather nice, too, being a Lyons manufacturer of that same fabric about a year ago, as three guineas was the customary price for it per yard, and now that the sales are almost over, and silver tissue no longer fashionable, I have seen the same thing exactly in Kensington High Street made up into quite a nice evening dress, the whole costing £5. Think of it!—with four yards of the material, I should think, in each garment.

Everybody seems still intrigued with the Benda masks which are being worn in "The League of Notions." Some extremists are all for having them worn generally, which seems rather silly to me. Mrs. Patrick Campbell said when she heard about them becoming a habit, "Why make up at all?" And because her little remark was so simple it has created quite a stir, which is always the way when a witty woman utters a banality.

I hear from Paris that cloaks are not likely to be worn so universally during the forthcoming summer. That is a pity, because they are the only style of wrap that is really becoming and enveloping when worn over river frocks and tennis things. A heavy coat seems all out of place, but a pale fawn duvetyn cloak, or any light colour for that matter, is just right. I remember remarking upon Lady Alistair Innes-Kerr's

Miss Gladys Cooper Explains Some Beauty Secrets

The Popular London Star Favours Simple Methods.

I have been asked to give a few simple recipes that I know, either through personal use or by observation, to be valuable to the toilet, and which are within the reach of the average women. In these days of £100 facial treatments and elaborate and expensive beautifying processes my suggestions may read like lessons in economy, but they are not especially so intended. They are merely practical suggestions, in which the keynote is "effectiveness." All the materials or ingredients which I mention are either already at hand in the home or may be readily procured from the chemist. Fortunately I do not suffer from the ailments or troubles enumerated below, but some people who are not so fortunate have told me their experiences, and with your permission I will set forth some remedies which they have found to be efficacious.

Home Made Hair Tonic.

My acquaintances say that a good stimulant to the natural growth of the hair is a very simple, effective and safe stimulating lotion made up by mixing one ounce of boranium with ½ pint of bay rum. This may be applied to the hair roots occasionally with the finger tips with good results.

Complexion Renewals.

Complexion experts advise me that a normal, healthy complexion is constantly renewing itself by dropping off in tiny flakes of worn-out tissue, thus revealing the fresh young skin underneath. They say that when this process is checked by age, exposure or some of many causes, the complexion becomes dull and ugly. The rational treatment recommended is to help the skin perform its natural functions of "shedding" worn-out tissue. For this purpose, I am informed, there is nothing so good as pure mercolized wax, used for a few nights, just as you would use a face cream. It is claimed that it possesses a special affinity for the effete scarf-skin, which it quickly removes by absorbing it. The face, I am assured, will soon look much younger and prettier under this treatment.

Removing Superfluous Hair.

I have been told of some most remarkable experiments in removing superfluous hair, roots and all, with what is said to be a perfectly harmless substance known as phelactine. It is claimed for this preparation that it is not a depilatory and therefore does not burn or injure the skin. With a candle flame it is first melted to a syrup-like consistency and while still warm is smeared on the skin over the superfluous hair. Although it is removed almost immediately the effect is supposed to paralyse and loosen the hair roots, for when it is removed the hair should come right with it and the roots themselves. I am told that in many cases the growth never reappears, and that even if it does so it returns only after a very long time and in so much weaker form that it is easy to cope with by means of a repeated application of phelactine. I understand that the method is becoming so well known that many chemists are now supplying phelactine in specially prepared packages containing full instructions for home use.

MISS GLADYS COOPER.
Photo] [Wrather & Buy.

Is Powder Necessary?

A great many women object to using powder, for various reasons. The following formula is a good one: Dissolve an ounce of cleminite in four tablespoonfuls of water, or witch-hazel, and use it as a face lotion, smoothing the skin with the fingers until it is dry. This method is perfectly harmless. I am told that a really beautiful, natural, velvety bloom results and remains for many hours quite unaffected by the most trying conditions out of doors or in the ball room or theatre, and that it gives a much more natural appearance to some skins than does ordinary powder.

Grey Hair.

I have observed many attempts of many people to conceal grey hair. Some of these experiments were amusing, some disastrous, and some were successful. Personally, I believe I shall let my hair turn when the appointed time comes, but if I were going to try to evade it, I would give a trial to a real old "grandmother" formula that would probably do the work. This formula, I am informed, has been used with degrees of success for many generations, and consists merely of two ounces of concentrate of tammalite mixed with three ounces of bay rum. It is applied to the grey hair a few times with a small sponge, and ladies tell me it appears to darken the hair to a natural shade, not like a dye, but gradually and naturally.

The Curling Iron.

Don't use a hot iron to curl your hair. Some of my friends make the cunningest sort of curls wherever they want them simply by dampening the hair with liquid silmerine before retiring at night When the hair is dry in the morning it will be softly curly just where you want it to be. This method is perfectly harmless, even beneficial to the hair and the curls last a long time. The liquid is quite pleasant and neither sticky nor greasy.

How to Shampoo.

Most women, I am informed, do not know how to use stallax properly when shampooing with it. Unless the hair is naturally very oily, a stallax shampoo may sometimes leave it rather dry. But I am told if you will apply olive oil freely to your hair and scalp just before shampooing with stallax, the result is most delightful. The hair will be left clean, soft, bright and wavy, the olive oil having properly balanced the action of this wonderful hair cleanser.

Care of the Hands.

An excellent method of putting the hands in fine condition and keeping them so, is to rub them with bicrolium jelly just before retiring at night. This quickly takes away roughness, redness, tan, etc., and makes them soft, white and smooth. After this has been done, an occasional application will keep them in proper form.

Gladys Cooper

NOTE.—This interesting article on beauty culture in general was written by Miss Gladys Cooper at the request of the manufacturers of Pilenta Soap—the best complexion soap in the world. On sale at all chemists.

last year at Queen's Club. Whatever weak points her game may, or may not, have had, she certainly looked impressive and smart on the courts.

A well-known Welbeck Street specialist was telling me about Viola Tree's first night—of "The Tempest" I mean, of course! He said that Winefred Barnes' singing was beautiful, and Miss Tree's dress as Juno good—what there was of it. He added that during the performance he couldn't help remembering the amateur show of the same play that some natives were giving in Calcutta as a little compliment to the English element there. He said that they hadn't the necessary "props" for the wreck, so they substituted a railway collision!

GET-THIN-QUICK

It is an unwritten law that one must feel five and look ten years younger than one is. Hence all the more or less helpful letters in the daily press from the obesity specialist, the physical culturist and the food crank. There is no doubt at all that obesity in man or woman is a drawback, and its first signs may be regarded as the beginning of the end of youth. Contours go, grace goes, and we look and feel middle-aged if we give way to overfatness. I have read, most carefully, all the letters that have appeared, besides many articles, on the subject of reducing, and had several chats with specialists, and I find that all the advice is good, and if followed would have the most beneficial and pleasing results, but—and this is the point—it very seldom *can* be followed by the modern fully-occupied society woman. She cannot refuse invitations or make herself ridiculous and her hostess uncomfortable by bringing forth some hard brown biscuits and an apple at lunch! and there *are* mornings, be she never so determined, when she simply cannot spare the time for prescribed exercises. And none of these remedies or diets are effective unless adhered to religiously. Dieting can be carried out more or less satisfactorily at the rich man's table if one is really strong-minded, but what most of us want is the get-thin-quick and easy way, and I believe that is Mrs. Adair's way. No woman grudges time for her bath, and Mrs. Adair's wonderful preparation, called the Ganesh Reducing Saltina, used in the bath reduces the most obstinate cases of obesity. During the treatment the usual food may be taken, such as butter, milk, etc., but a rapid decrease in weight will nevertheless be observed. The Ganesh Reducing Saltina will stimulate the circulatory exchanges and remove all foreign and impure matter from the pores of the skin and give back the respiratory faculties to the skin. After the first fortnight's treatment the stomach decreases in size, shortwindedness disappears, the figure, hips and loins become freer, and the fleshy parts recover their elasticity and firmness. One box of the Ganesh Reducing Saltina is required for a bath, which should be taken daily. The Saltina should be put in as hot water as can be borne, and the bather should remain in the water for twenty minutes. From one to two dozen boxes are required for a complete course of treatment, according to the degree of obesity of a case. Price, 1s. 6d. per box, or 15s. per dozen boxes.

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